

**THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN
GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES IN KENYA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

BY

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K50/7573/2006

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

OCTOBER 2012

Declaration

This research study is my original work and has not been presented in this form or any other for an award in any other university.

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Signature.



Date

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This research project has been submitted with my approval as the supervisor on behalf of the School of Journalism, University of Nairobi.

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Date . . . \ \ ? \

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to my wife Mereza Akinyi, son Kevin Omondi and daughter Fiona Atieno whose great love and inspiration saw me through this study.

To my supervisor Dr. Tom Kwanya whose guidance was very crucial throughout the period of my study. His keenness and insightfulness cannot be overemphasized. My most sincere gratitude goes to him.

I am grateful to Christopher Wasiaya, Stephen Muthigani, Gwaro Ogaro, Simon Owaka, Abel Nyagwa, Nicholas Manyolo, Gerald Netia, Ngare Njeru, Shikhutuli Namusyule, and Joseph Obwocha critical roles in the study. Your moral support was touching.

I am humbled by the support of PROs who participated in the study as respondents despite their tight schedules.

Special thanks to Zarina Kasu, former Director of Information, and Mohamedi ole Mohaa, former head of Kenya News Agency, for their support and recommendation.

My gratitude also goes to Moses Araya whose presence at the School of Journalism has always been instrumental.

I salute the late Akwenda Ombaka and all the Ministry of Information and Communications Human Resource Department (Training) officers for their role in this quest.

Any remaining mistakes in the study are entirely my own.

Dedication

This piece of work is dedicated to my father, Samuel Omondi Oluoch, and mother, Roseline Atieno Omondi, whose love for knowledge saw me through school despite their meagre resources.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACCE	African Council on Communication Education
AIE	Authority to Incur Expenditure
AIS	African Information Services
BC	Before Christ
CoR	Code of Regulations
DOI	Department of Information
DPM	Directorate of Personnel Management
FAPRA	Federation of African Public Relations Association
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GNA	Ghana News Agency
IPR	Institute of Public Relations
IPRA	International Public Relations Association
KIS	Kenya Information Services
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KNA	Kenya News Agency
PR	Public Relations
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PRSK	Public Relations Society of Kenya
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UK	United Kingdom
US/ USA	United States (of America)
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service

Abstract

Public Relations practice has been widely recognised as an essential part of modern life, and has made significant contribution in various sectors including government agencies globally.

The study: The Performance of Public Relations Practice in Government Ministries in Kenya: A Critical Analysis was essential since the practice continue to build a positive image of government and publicize government development agenda and policies among the citizenry.

This study sought to assess the place, the relevance and impact of Public Relations in government ministries and departments. It investigated whether the PROs play their roles effectively, the factors that affect the performance of the practice, and recommended ways of improving PR practice in government ministries.

The study adopted the survey research design. It used a sample size of 79 out of the 100 Public Relations Officers in government ministries and departments. Out of the sample, 46 responded representing a 58.2% return rate. The study used purposive sampling.

The study found that PR practice has had high impact in government ministries and departments according to 45.2% of the respondents. Nineteen percent of the respondents said that PR activities have had very high impact in their organizations whereas 33% of the respondents said that the PR activities have had an average impact on their organizations. Only 2.4% believed that PR activities have had low impact on their organization.

The study recommended that PROs be made the official spokespersons of their respective ministries or departments to accord them the opportunity to expound on policy matters and engage more with the citizenry. It recommended that further research be done on the relevance and impact of PR practice in government. It also recommended that research be carried out to establish the linkage between the lack of a national communication policy framework and the formulation of communication strategies by various ministries.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Public Relations (PR) refers to the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. It entails building sustainable relationships between an organisation and all its publics in order to create a positive brand image.

Edward Bernays defines PR as "a management function which tabulates public attitudes, defines policies, procedures and interests of an organisation followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (Bernays, 1945).

At its meeting in Mexico in 1978, the world assembly of Public Relations Associations agreed that: "Public relations is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organizations and the public interest" (Harrison, 2000:6).

In 1991, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in the UK defined Public Relations practice as "the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its publics".

Harrison (2000:2) says this has now been expanded to include the concept of "reputation management" as being about reputation-the result of what you do, what others say and what others say about you. Public Relations practice is the discipline which looks after reputation-with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics" (Harrison. 2000:2).

And according to Eugene Decker, Public Relations is best defined as "a planned effort to influence public opinion through acceptable performance and two way communications" (Decker, 1974:2).

Wilcox et al (2004:4) say "PR practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned which will serve both the organisation and the public interest.

Public Relations has been practised sporadically since the earliest times even though the name is comparatively recent. The earliest concrete roots of Public Relations can be traced back to around 1800 B.C. in the Middle East when archaeologists found a farm bulletin in Iraq that advised farmers of the time on how to sow their crops, how to irrigate, how to deal with field mice, and how to harvest their crops (Cutlip, 1994:89).

On the African continent, the application of PR techniques date back to the beginning of the African civilisation. According to Narty in Rensburg (2002:5), the concept of PR was practised in Africa before the era of colonialism. In ancient Egypt, the pharaohs proclaimed their achievements through word-pictures on impressive monuments (Van Heerden. 2004:108).

In Kenya, according to Mbeke (2008), the evolution of Public Relations is closely tied to the civilisation of the 42 ethnic communities. The practice of and application of Public Relations techniques is not new to Kenyan communities such as the Luo, Kikuyu, Luhya, Kamba, Nandi, and Kisii. among others.

Mbeke (2008) says each of these communities had their own communication systems, structures, styles, and even spokespersons. Concepts such as corporate identity, corporate branding, and reputation management were not unknown to them. Members of various Nilotic communities such as the Luo and Tugen, among others removed the lower teeth as a rite of passage. The Luos removed six while the Tugen removed one. This enabled the easy identification of members of these communities, especially during war or multiethnic social interactions.

Mbeke (2008) says various methods of branding were used to enhance group membership identification. For instance, Masai and Samburu nomadic communities in Kenya used to brand their bodies with various tattoos and ornaments that made them easily recognisable. Many of the communities, he says, practised Public Relations during marital affairs. Family reputation was very important in the selection of a spouse. Among the Luos, kinsmen and women scouted for reliable brides and grooms for their young men and women. Upon identifying a suitable young person, the aunt or uncle would befriend such a youth with a

view to understand their character, personality and family background. The aunts and uncles would act as mediators between the two families and organise initial contact meetings between the two families before the presentation of the bride price and wedding ceremony. The objective of such consultations was to improve understanding between the two families.

During such meetings and ceremonies, the in-laws maintained high levels of hospitality and charity with a view to establishing a good reputation with the in-laws. Participants at these meetings were carefully chosen by the bride's or groom's family to present a favourable image (Mbeke, 2008). He further explains that the evolution of PR is closely tied to Kenya's history and past based on imperialism. The practice of PR can be traced far back to the time of early western explorers' forays in Kenya between 1844 and 1884 (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995).

The explorers wanted to find the source of River Nile as well as champion the abolition of slave trade. Johan Kraft, a German missionary of the Church Missionary Society, was the first European to enter Kenya and start work in Rabai, near Mombasa in 1844. Rebmann and Ehardt joined him in 1846 and 1849 respectively. Both the explorers and the Kenyans practised interpersonal communications and social Public Relations then.

The practice of PR by both the explorers and the Kenyan communities improved relations between them. The explorers had to gain the goodwill of the Kenyan communities at the coast who provided labour and acted as guides during the explorations. There were negotiations and consultations between the explorers and the leaders of the various communities for safe passage (Mbeke: 2008).

According to Mbeke (2008) Kraft and Ehardt's reports about equatorial snow-capped Mt. Kilimanjaro in 1848 and Mt. Kenya in 1849 respectively were a publicity masterpiece and caused a lot of interest in Europe. It put Kenya on the global map in such a way that it attracted millions of tourists and adventurers. The two drew sketch maps to increase understanding of Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Kenya among Europeans. In their own right, these explorers were the early publicists in Kenya.

Mbeke (2008) says that owing to the improved understanding between Kraft and the Miji Kenda communities at Rabai, Kraft mastered Swahili, the local language. He translated the Bible into Kiswahili, the national language of Kenya, as well as producing the first Kiswahili grammar dictionary. These were great PR tools that improved understanding between the

explorers and Kenyans. Kraft's work contributed immensely to the evangelization of Kenya by various Christian communities.

Further, Mbeke (2008) says the contribution of business in the development of Public Relations started as early as the 1870s. H.H. Johnson, an English businessman, signed treaties with chiefs in Taveta where he planted wheat and coffee. The contribution of business in the development of Public Relations started as early as the 1870s. He further explains that an example of lobbying in the country were the numerous petitions to the British government to declare Kenya a British colony, which however failed, written by H.H. Johnson.

Mbeke (2008) further says that the partition of Africa and the building of the railway from Mombasa in Kenya to Uganda between 1895 and 1901 also played a role in the development of Public Relations in Kenya. The partition of Africa into "spheres of influence" controlled by various European powers set in motion events that not only publicised, but also put Kenya onto the global geo-political map (History World, 2007).

Mbeke (2008) argues that English businessmen such as William MacKinnon practised social Public Relations when they confirmed and signed new treaties with various chiefs and leaders in coastal regions of Kenya immediately after the partitioning of Africa. Public Relations continued to evolve in Kenya when the colonial government introduced propaganda material.

A weekly bulletin, *Habari za Vita*, was introduced to disseminate information about the First World War to relatives and families of soldiers. The colonial government replaced *Habari za Vita* with *Baraza* in 1939, and *Pamoja* newspapers to provide information to the Kenyan public (Makali, 2004).

The colonial government formed the Kenya Information Services (KIS) in 1940 with the objective of popularising the war among Kenyans. KIS outlived its usefulness after the war and changed its name to African Information Services (AIS). However, it served the interests of the white settlers and the colonial administration. In 1953, it became the Department of Information (DOI) with the appointment of first press officers. DOI served mainly as a propaganda machine, especially during the state of emergency between 1953 and 1960 (PRSK Arena, 2006).

According to Black (1976:201), records of the early Greek and Roman empires show that great care and attention was devoted to influencing public opinion. He says Public Relations

in those days appears to have been an integral part of government with the Romans having dramatised the importance of public opinion in the slogan *vox populi, vox dei* - the voice of the people is the voice of God.

Modern governments have also used Public Relations to explain and implement their policies. For example, in Britain, Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer 'organised a team of lecturers to explain the first old age pension scheme' in 1912 (Jefkins, 1992:4). The government subsequently used Public Relations to ensure the citizens understood its health and housing schemes of the 1920s.

In the USA, the War Department became, in 1919, the first client of Edward Bernays' consultancy, formed with his wife, Doris Fleischman, after his wartime service with the US Information Service. Their job was to implement a programme for the re-employment of ex-servicemen (Harrison, 2000:21).

Public relations has become an important tool for governments following the push for good governance and fledgling democracy. Governments have also used public relations to assist the news media in coverage of their activities.

Access to information is essential for democracy since it ensures that the citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out their oaths of office wishes of those who elected them.¹

In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between the media and the government represents a vital and healthy element of a fully functioning democracy. In post-conflict or ethnically homogenous societies such as conflictual, tension-ridden relationships may not be appropriate, but the role of the press to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society remains critical.²

Support for the media yields results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralisation, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy process.

¹ Centre for democracy and Governance, *The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach*; Pg 3
Centre for democracy and Governance. *The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach (Technical Publication Series. 1999)*, Pg 3

The rule of law may further be institutionalised by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the Judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.³

1.1 Background to the Study

The role of Public Relations is vital in improving government image. The positions of Public Relations Officers (PROs) were created in Kenya in 1983 by the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which decided to send its Information Officers to various Ministries to act as the link between the Ministry and the public (Ombara, 2001:6).

According to Ombara (2001:6), the main function of PROs in government institutions is to help articulate the government policy and to publicise the ministries' activities. Essentially, a PRO should try to make his or her ministry more accountable to the public. The role of a PRO is to channel out important information from the ministries to the public through the press and other forums, make the ministries more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving a positive image of ministries.

Ombara (2001:6) says other functions of a PRO include assisting in the preparation of ministerial speeches by polishing them ready for functions, issuing press releases, providing adequate press coverage for the ministry in a positive and meaningful way, highlighting ministry activities, advising senior management on relevant publicity programmes and creating rapport between senior management and junior staff.

According to the Kenya Civil Service Code of Regulations (CoR), the Department of Information in the ministry responsible for communication is the recognised channel for all government information to the local and the international mass media (DPM, 2006). Ministries and departments are, therefore, expected to maintain regular liaison through Public Relations Officers seconded to them to ensure the fullest possible publicity for any information they wish to communicate to the public through the media.

However, the PROs do more than ensuring that the activities of ministries and departments are publicised. They are involved in issues management and community relations, among others.

The posting of Information Officers to serve as Public Relations Officers in government ministries is a tradition borrowed heavily from Britain where, according to Black (1976:141), the staff working in government relations are drawn from the Information Officer Class, a general service class of the Civil Service which first came into existence in 1949.

According to Harrison (2000:171), in Britain, the job of the senior Public Relations professional in a government department is a key one. The press secretary or chief information officer in a government department advises the minister of state on all Public Relations matters, provides comments and quotes to the media, and sometimes writes speeches for the minister.

The general functions of PROs in government ministries include propagation of government policy, projection and improvement/shaping of government image, changing public perception/worldview of government and promoting the services of the respective ministries.

1.2 Public Relations Practice in Kenya

Black (1976:192) says Public Relations in Kenya is practised relatively extensively in comparison with other countries in the developing world. He says the first Public Relations consultancy was established in East Africa in mid-1950s, and parastatal organisations such as the East African Railways and Harbours Corporation set up Public Relations departments and hired consultants from London.

According to Abuoga and Mutere (1988:90), the first Public Relations consultancy in the country was Dunford Hall & Partners that was established in 1955 from a partnership of Michael Dunford and Andrew Hall.

The Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) was formed in 1971 to correct the PR outlook and enhance its professionalism following infiltration of the profession by all manner of people without public relations backgrounds.

"With the very name Public Relations being challenged by such euphemisms as public affairs, corporate communication, public information, and a variety of others; and as the

profession found itself vulnerable to the encroachment of people without public relations backgrounds, such as lawyers, marketers, and general managers of every stripe, an attempt was made to correct the PR outlook in 1971 with the establishment of the *Public Relations Society of Kenya*. Full membership to the society was restricted to those who had proven experience and/or approved academic qualifications including membership to any other international public relations bodies with entrance qualifications no less strict than the PRSK" (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988: 89).

The membership of PRSK had to subscribe to the society's code of professional conduct. The application of the code had its desired effect, providing for the first time in Kenya criteria for judging the professional qualities of the PR practitioner (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988: 90).

In June 1975, the society organised the first All Africa Public Relations Conference to coincide with the annual general assembly of the *International Public Relations Association (IPRA)*. This was the first time that IPRA, founded in 1955, met in Africa during which the Federation of African Public Relations Association (FAPRA) was formally established with its interim headquarters in Nairobi (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988: 90).

However, Public Relations practice in Kenya, according to PRSK, is yet to be fully recognised. "Kenya's Public Relations industry is yet to receive the recognition it deserves although it has evolved both in depth and width. Whereas Public Relations is a respected and lucrative industry in other parts of the world, a lot has to be done to make the PR industry in Kenya a highly respected and prestigious profession" (PRSK:2009).

1.3 Problem Statement

As earlier stated, the role of Public Relations in government varies widely. The diversity of goals and activities in government is greater than in any other area of Public Relations practice. Government touches every aspect of society, and virtually every facet of government is closely tied to and reliant upon Public Relations (Cutlip et al, 1994:462).

This therefore calls for Public Relations practice in government to be given serious consideration in terms of budgetary allocations, staffing, positioning, and recognition.

However, according to Ombara (2001:4), Public Relations units in many ministries are not well established. The units exist as small offices, with inadequate facilities and often rely on other offices for equipment.

Further, some Information Officers who are seconded to various ministries as PROs lack adequate training and are usually not prepared to undertake their duties as Government Public Relations Officers (Ombara, 2001:4).

She further says that Public Relations officers are often ignored as they do not qualify as managers. Often, they cannot articulate government policy.

Based on the problem stated, the purpose of the study was to assess whether Public Relations officers in government ministries play their role effectively. The study sought to find out if the PROs are able or well facilitated to discharge their mandate. It explored the factors that impact on PR functions in government ministries.

1.4 Overall Objective

The overall objective of this study was to assess the performance of Public Relations Officers in government ministries. That is, it aimed to assess the relevance and impact of Public Relations practice in government ministries.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- To investigate whether the PROs in government ministries play their role effectively;
- To explore the factors which affect the effective practice of PR in government ministries.

To recommend ways of improving PR practice in government ministries.

1.5 Research Questions

- i) How effective are the PROs in government ministries?
- ii) What factors affect the practice of effective PR in government ministries?
- iii) What needs to be done to strengthen PR practice in government ministries?

1.6 Assumptions

This study assumed that PROs will be co-operative and answer the research questions as objectively as possible in the course of the study. It also assumed that its findings will help push PR practice in government to a higher level.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study covered PR practitioners in the government ministries. It looked at the level of professionalism in PR practice in government ministries, the working environment of PROs and ways of improving the practice of PR in government ministries. The study was exploratory since there are hardly studies on the issue to refer to.

1.8 Justification and significance of the study

The study helped to isolate the factors that affect PR practice in government ministries. It showed the place or importance of public relations in government.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.0 Introduction

Public Relations practice has become an essential part of modern life, and has settled down to making an important contribution to governments, industry, the community, and many other fields (Black, 1976:15-16).

Government is intended to provide services that would otherwise be impractical for individuals to provide, such as law enforcement and fire protection, wildlife preservation, national defence, public transportation systems, justice systems, social programs, and national museums. The problems and pressures of society increasingly strain the machinery of government (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:463).

Black (1976:16-17) explains that Public Relations in central and local governments should be non-political. It is to promote democracy through full information and not to advance the policy of any political party. He says Public Relations is an essential part of management, both in central government and industry.

Black (1976:3) explains further that the purpose of Public Relations practice is to establish a two-way communication mechanism to resolve conflicts of interests by seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information. The scale of activity to promote good Public Relations may vary considerably according to the size and nature of the interested parties, but the philosophy, the strategy and the methods will be very similar whether the Public Relations programme influences international understanding or to improve relations between a company and its customers, agents and employees.

The most basic function of government Public Relations is to contribute to the definition and achievement of government programme goals, enhance government responsiveness and service, and to provide the public with sufficient information to permit self government (Aronoff & Baskin, 1983: 306).

Cutlip *et al* (1994:463) say that as government becomes more complex and ubiquitous, the challenge of maintaining citizen involvement and ensuring that government is responsive to societal needs becomes more difficult. Elected officials often claim credit for their election on

their ability to keep a finger on the pulse of the constituents. However, because of the sheer magnitude and complexity of the job, most of that responsibility falls on government Public Relations specialists.

The greatest irritant most people experience in their dealings with government is the arrogance of the bureaucracy. People today expect to be valued as customers; even by government (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:488).

Overall goals for government Public Relations programmes, regardless of the level of government, have at least three things in common: informing constituents about the activities of the government agency; ensuring active cooperation in government programmes (for example, voting, curbside recycling), as well as compliance in regulatory programmes (for example, mandatory seat belt use, antismoking ordinances); and fostering citizen support for established policies and programmes (for example foreign aid, welfare) (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:466).

However, the belief by most people that government communication is "spin doctored" or "propaganda" is a great challenge to government public relations. Cynism about Public Relations in government is greatest when associated with elected officials or "politicians". Within an environment of skepticism, many view communication from elected officials as mere propaganda (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:489).

Harrison (2000:8) says that because Public Relations is sometimes seen as an instrument of persuasion, it is useful to distinguish it from propaganda which Bhushan (1991: 244) refers to as a conscious, systematic, and organized effort which is designed deliberately to manipulate or influence the decisions, actions, or beliefs of a large number of people in a specified direction on a controversial issue.

Josef Goebbels, the prime propagandist of the Nazi movement in Germany in 1930s, said: "Propaganda is an instrument of politics, and a power of social control. The function of propaganda is not essentially to convert, rather it is to attract followers and keep them in line. The task of propaganda, given suitable avenues, is to blanket every area of human activity so that the environment of the individual is changed to absorb the movement's world views" (Harrison: 2000:8).

Since propaganda's main objective is influencing people by spreading information which may be false or exaggerated, it gives no regard to public opinion and seeks to serve selfish interests.

Black (1976:5) says propaganda does not necessarily call for ethical content, and the word is used these days mainly to describe those types of persuasion which are based solely on self interest and in which it may be necessary to distort the facts or even to falsify them in order to achieve the purpose.

Public Relations, on the other hand, recognises a long-term responsibility and seeks to persuade and to achieve mutual understanding by securing the willing acceptance of attitudes and ideas. It can succeed only when the basic policy is ethical and the means used are truthful. In Public Relations, the end can never justify the use of false, harmful or questionable means (Black: 1976:5).

Public Relations therefore, unlike propaganda, gives due importance to public opinion, accuracy, and ethics.

Public Relations activities in the modern world help individuals and organizations to build prestige, to promote products, and to win elections or legislative battles; in short, to achieve their aims in the public sphere (Encarta Encyclopedia, 2005).

Decker (1974:2) says that the purpose of a Public Relations effort, therefore, is to gain and hold a favourable opinion of publics of an organization. He suggests that developing a Public Relations effort involves five steps: determining content of the message, identifying publics, choice of communication methods, assignment of personnel responsibilities and evaluation.

Black (1976) says that action to broaden the sphere of influence of an organization by appropriate publicity, advertising, exhibitions and films as well as everything directed towards improving communication between people and organizations are important aspects of PR practice.

Public Relations is neither a barrier between the truth and the public nor is it propaganda to impose a point of view regardless of truth, ethics and the public good. It is not publicity aimed directly at achieving sales, although Public Relations activities can be very helpful to sales and marketing efforts. It is not composed of stunts or gimmicks. It is not unpaid

advertising nor is it merely press relations, although press work is a very important part of most Public Relations programmes (Black: 1976).

According to Black (1976), practical applications of Public Relations practice should entail positive steps to achieve goodwill. These, he says, involve initiating and maintaining goodwill and public interest in the activities of an organization in order to facilitate the successful operation and expansion of those activities. Practical applications of Public Relations practice should aim at action to safeguard reputation.

It is important to look inward at the organization and to eliminate customs and practices which, though legitimate, are likely to offend public opinion or to interfere with mutual understanding.

Newsom, Turk and Kruckberg (1996:4) in Van Heerden (2004) describe the function of and/or role of PR practice by using the following ten principles: PR deals with reality, not false fronts. Conscientiously planned programmes that put the public interest in the forefront are the basis of sound PR policy; PR is a service oriented profession in which public interest, not personal reward, should be the primary consideration; PR practitioners must go to the public to seek support for programmes and policies; public interest is the central criterion by which programmes and policies should be selected; PR practitioners reach many publics through the mass media, which are the public channels of communication; the integrity of these channels must be preserved; PR practitioners act as intermediaries between organizations and their publics and they must be effective communicators - conveying information back and forth until understanding is reached; PR practitioners expedite two-way communication and are responsible for the extensive use of scientific public opinion research to understand what their publics are saying and to reach them effectively; PR practitioners must employ the social sciences psychology, sociology, social psychology, public opinion, communications study and semantics; PR practitioners must adapt the work of other related disciplines, including learning theory and other psychology theories, sociology, political science, economics and history. Thus the PR field requires multidisciplinary applications.

PR practitioners are also obligated to explain issues to the public before these problems become crises; and PR practitioners should be measured by only one standard: ethical performance.

2.1.1 PR in Government and Politics

Cutlip *et al* (1994:462), suggest that the role of Public Relations in government varies widely. The diversity of goals and activities in government is greater than any other area of Public Relations practice. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that governments touch every aspect of society, and virtually every facet of government is closely tied to and reliant upon Public Relations.

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

Democracy, defined as government of the people, by the people, for the people, cannot function properly without good Public Relations. The electorate requires knowledge on how the government functions, information on decisions being made in its name, and education in order to take full advantage of the facilities and services provided. Clearly, there is need for Public Relations activities to help citizens understand their privileges and responsibilities under a democratic form of government (Black, 1976:6).

Much of the significant dialogue needed to ensure democracies function properly is generated, moulded and enunciated by Public Relations practitioners. The success and stability of democratic government are determined by continuous citizens' approval, and this approval is the one public information officers seek. In the democratic system, it is assumed that government will respond to the wishes of the governed and Public Relations work to determine the wishes of the governed and strive to make government responsive to those wishes (AronofT& Baskin, 1983: 306).

Government Public Relations activities, many embraced by terms such as *public affairs* and *public information*, have developed as a political and administrative response to various organizational goals. They are a key component of the administrative system, specifically designed to bridge the gap between popular and bureaucratic government (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:465).

2.1.2 Public Relations Practice by the British Government

The British government first employed Public Relations in 1912 when Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, organized a team of lecturers to explain the first old age pension scheme in 1912 (Jefkins, 1992:4). Now all government departments have their quota of press officers and public affairs specialists (Harrison: 2000:171).

Public Relations is essentially non political and has two main tasks: to give regular information on policy, plans and achievements of the department; and to inform and educate the public on legislation, regulation and matters that affect the daily life of citizens. It must also advise ministers and senior officials of reaction and potential reaction to actual or proposed policies (Black: 1976:6).

Harrison (2000:171) says in the UK, central government Public Relations is conducted largely through the Government Information and Communication Service. Local government Public Relations is the province of individual local authorities, each of which has its own arrangements - or none. The staff working in government relations are drawn from the Information Officer Class, a general service class of the Civil Service which first came into existence in 1949 (Black: 1976:141).

In Britain, the job of the senior Public Relations professional in a government department is a key one. The press secretary or chief information officer in a government department advises the minister of state on all Public Relations matters, provides comments and quotes to the media, and sometimes writes speeches for the minister. It is important to remember, however, that the Public Relations staff are non-partisan. They are not there to perform the function of image-maker to a politician. Ministers have their own 'special advisers' to undertake that role (Harrison: 2000:171). However, each minister is responsible for the public relations policy of his department (Black, 1976:141).

2.1.3 Public Relations Practice by the US Government

Democracy in the United States is structured upon principles that mandate effective Public Relations, with apathy and ignorance as its greatest enemies. Without an informed and active citizenry, elected and appointed officials may lose touch with true needs of their constituents. Programmes costing millions may be undertaken to address public needs that have been overestimated, while the real needs remain hidden. Special interest politics may dominate

decision making. Citizen discontent may linger just under the surface, but once it appears it can be fuelled by simplistic rhetoric in place of a deeper understanding of issues (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:463).

Most far-reaching of the federal government's Public Relations apparatus is the United States Information Agency (USIA). USIA employs nearly 10,000 people and is America's Public Relations arm in 129 countries around the world. Its budget (annual) is slightly under \$1 billion. USIA's primary mission is "to support the national interest by conveying an understanding abroad of what the United States stand for as a nation and as a people; to explain the nation's policies and to present a true picture of the society, institutions, and culture in which those policies evolve" (Seitel, 1987:389).

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

USIA interprets public opinion overseas and provides analysis and feedback to the federal government. USIA, an independent agency within the executive branch, reports directly to the president. It is perhaps best known for its radio broadcast network. Voice of America, which began during World War II and was responsible for providing information to American troops and citizens in war areas. In addition, USIA operates Worldnet, a satellite television service, and various other programs and services.

Overseas, USIA is known as the United States Information Service, or USIS. In American embassies, the chief USIS officials are the public affairs officers. They advise ambassadors and other diplomats on relevant Public Relations issues affecting U.S. interests and policy and on embassy operations and relationships within host countries. A vital responsibility of USIA is to correct information or to counter adverse propaganda that might have a detrimental effect on the United States (Cutlip *et al*, 1994:468).

2.1.4 Public Relations Practice by the Ghana Government

In Ghana, according to Ghana Government Portal, www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php, the Information Services Department (ISD) serves as the government's major Public Relations organization locally and abroad.

The department is mandated to create awareness of government policies, programmes and activities, promote Ghana's international marketing agenda, provide Public Relations support to government ministries, departments, agencies, and Ghana's missions abroad.

Its modus operandi include organizing regular weekly interactions with the media on Tuesdays and Thursdays on various issues and government programmes; produce various audio-visual documentaries for public education and outreach programmes.

According to the Ghanaian government, the ISD has contributed tremendously to the dissemination of information in the past through the use of visual, audio, print and face-to-face interaction through drama, films and talk shows, mounted on the ubiquitous cinema vans which criss-crossed the whole country and is determined to do more for the country with the advent of ICTs.

It says that when the portal www.ghana.gov.gh was established in 2002, the department assumed additional responsibility by discharging its traditional functions electronically through the provision of information and other public services through the internet. It further says that the facility to be one effective communication tool to disseminate Government's information to the public and get feedback to provide the way forward in national development. The portal links the ministries, departments, and agencies with websites and other institutions.

The Ghana News Agency (GNA) plays a major role in contributing to the political, social and economic development of the nation through data-gathering, processing and dissemination through wire service while the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), has the mandate to inform, educate and entertain as well as engage in commercial broadcasting.

According to the Ghanaian government, GBC has made significant contributions not only to the spread of knowledge but also an instrument of education and a source of entertainment.

Broadcasting to a predominantly a non-literate society, GBC has over the years contributed in a far greater way to the enlightenment and mobilisation of the Ghanaian populace for national development.

2.1.5 Public Relations Practice by Kenya Government

The Department of Information in the ministry responsible for communication is the recognised channel for all government information to the local and the international mass media (DPM, 2006).

Ministries and departments are, therefore, expected to maintain regular liaison through Public Relations Officers seconded to them to ensure the fullest possible publicity for any information they wish to communicate to the public through the media.

The positions of Public Relations Officers were created in Kenya in 1983 by the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which decided to send its Information Officers to various Ministries to act as the link between the Ministry and the public (Ombara, 2001:6).

The main function of PROs in government institutions is to help articulate the government policy and to publicise the ministries' activities. Essentially, a PRO should try to make his or her ministry more accountable to the public. The role of a PRO is to channel out important information from the ministries to the public through the press and other forums, make the ministries more accessible to the public and the press, handle press queries and churn out publications giving a positive image of ministries. Other functions of a PRO include assisting in the preparation of ministerial speeches by polishing them, issuing press releases, providing adequate press coverage for the ministry in a positive and meaningful way, highlighting ministry activities, advising senior management on relevant publicity programmes and creating rapport between senior management and junior staff (Ombara (2001:6).

Through the Kenya News Agency (KNA) and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) the Kenya government gathers, processes and disseminates news and information for national development to the citizenry.

KNA was established in 1963 through an Act of Parliament and has a network of 78 stations. It circulates an average of 150 news items per day to its subscribers including newspapers,

radio and TV stations, and some international news agencies,
(www.kenyanewsagency.go.ke/index/php).

KBC was established by an Act of Parliament CAP 221 of the Laws of Kenya to undertake public broadcasting services. Its mandate is to inform, educate and entertain the public through the radio and television services and therefore propagate all that consolidates national unity, peace and development. The broadcaster's prime objectives are to: increase understanding among the people of on government development policies and strategies, impart knowledge on the process of effective communication with the public, promote an effective approach to use of national development, and to offer suitable entertainment services to the people of Kenya. (Ministry of Information & Communications Strategic Plan 2006–2010).

The Kenya government also practices PR through the office of the Government Spokesman under the Office of the President.

According to the Service Charter for the Office of Public Communications of October 2007, the Office of Public Communications was established through a Cabinet Memorandum Min. 118/03 of November 2003 and placed under Cabinet Office, Office of the President. (www.communication.go.ke).

It is charged with the responsibility of coordinating, planning and executing communications on Government policies and programmes. It also coordinates ideas designed to attract both local and international investors to Kenya. The office became operational in July 2004 when the first Public Communications Secretary and Government Spokesperson came into office.

The office of the Government Spokesman aims at being an excellent facilitator of communication between the Government of Kenya and its publics for prosperity by building an efficient and proactive government communication system through research, training and information dissemination for good governance and positive image of Kenya.

The core functions of the Office of Government Spokesman/Public Communications Secretary include : carrying out research on communication aspects of Government and providing appropriate strategies for effective communication; propagating Government policies and programmes and disseminating accurate information.

Other functions are advising the Government on best practices in dealing with the media; anticipating public concerns and responding to them appropriately; liaising with the media on matters touching on Government; ensuring good working relations between the Government, media and the general public; liaising with Ministries/Departments on matters relating to dissemination of relevant information pertaining to their operations; editing and producing journals and other publications aimed at improving Government image; and using communication to encourage nationalism and patriotism .

Government ministries and bodies are expected to furnish the Office of Public Communications with Press Statements and Press Releases and provide updated information for communication to the public.

The Government Spokesman holds weekly press briefings.

2.2.0 Theoretical Framework

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

2.2.1 Systems Theory

Ludwig von Bertalanffy who established the field of study known as the general systems as it is known today best codified this theory (Littlejohn, 1999:41). A system consists of two or more units that relate to each other in a structural relationship and form an entity whose elements are functionally interdependent (Abraham, 1991:39).

A system is a set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states. Influential on organisational communication, systems theory explains how and why people form groups, each of which is a system as well as part of a larger system. The systems perspective applies for Public Relations because mutually independent relationships are established and maintained between organisations and their publics.

Mersham *et al.* (1995:47) say that the system's primary function is to maintain itself, therefore the interactions of the system (mechanical, organic and social) and the environment, ultimately define the system.

Open and Closed Systems

There are two types of systems, that is, open and closed systems. Open systems exchange energy, material and information with systems in their environment. Closed systems seal their boundaries and do not exchange energy with their environment (Spicer, 1997; Gregory, 1999:267).

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

According to Gregory (1999:67), and Cutlip, Center & Broom (2000:234), the exchange of inputs and outputs through boundaries, allowing energy and/or information to pass through is an explanation of the open system. It adjusts and adapts to counteract or accommodate environmental variations. A closed system, however, does not allow any energy or information through its environment. It therefore does not adapt to external change and eventually disintegrates. This type of system is concerned with the internal work of an organisation. The ultimate goal of the system is to survive and therefore interaction with the environment to is necessary to maintain balance.

Application of Systems Theory to Public Relations

Pressures can come from many sources in the environment (anything that generates change pressures on a system and includes information, energy and matter inputs) and PR must anticipate these pressures and deal with them.

As counsellors to top executives and line management, the Public Relations staff is charged with keeping the organisation sensitive to environmental changes, anticipating as well as reacting to changes.

Systems and Sub-Systems

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

Open System Model in Public Relations

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

The key element of open systems, according to Katz & Khan in Gregory (1999:267), are input, throughput, output, interdependence, transactional relationship with the environment and boundaries (Cutlip *et al*, 2000:234).

Systems receive inputs from the environment that affects its equilibrium and ultimately have an effect on the system's goal. These environmental inputs are often a reaction to a system's outputs. This provides feedback within the system in order to adjust the structure and process of the system so as to reach equilibrium (Cutlip *et al*, 2000:234).

According to Holmstrom (1996:53), the focus of systems thinking is on the interaction between the parts. An open system develops an inner dynamic by means of an exchange process with its environment. This system can change its state when the environment changes. This can be done without having to completely change the system's structure. Systems therefore control their inner state by their own inner dynamics. An important principle and prerequisite for the closure of the self-creation system is therefore openness.

The open systems model helped this research since the study sought to find the input of PROs in government ministries and outside factors that impact on their work.

2.2.2 The Value of System's Thinking to PR

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

The two-way symmetrical model focuses on shared meaning, which will have behavioural and organisational consequences. In order for PR practitioners to apply the open systems approach, environmental scanning is essential so as to anticipate changes in the environment. These changes will influence the organisations and the relationships with the stakeholder groups.

Cutlip *et al* (2000:239) contends that open systems use information in order to make adjustments and refer to this as proactive PR programmes. Bell & Bell in Gregory (1999:269) say that open systems enable PR practitioners to fulfil a management role, participating in decision making. According to Spicer (1997:57), the systems theory is important for PR based on three reasons: Organisations were previously very concerned with studying an organisation by largely focusing on the internal workings of the organisation. The systems theory moved this locus to a focus on the interdependence of an organisation and its environment.

The systems theory guides research and theorising in scientific communities. This theory is very prominent in the PR definitions and the understanding of PR is encapsulated by an emerging organisational view of the field through the general systems theory (Grunig, 1992:71; Pavlik, 1987 in Spicer 1997:58). PR concepts such as boundary-spanning activities and adaptation to the environment reflect a general systems theory approach to PR.

The systems theory serves as a useful heuristic tool in assisting the PR function to conceptualise the complex nature of organisational interdependencies. It also provides a framework for thinking about aspects of importance in understanding organisational PR decision making and effectiveness. This type of thinking provides individuals with an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole.

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

The systems theory provides an understanding of the importance of adapting to the increasingly unstable and threatening environments organisations function in.

2.2.3 The Relevance of Systems Thinking

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

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A research design, according to Franfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:98) is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation. This is the programme that guides the investigator in collecting, analyzing and interpreting observations.

The study used the survey. This is because surveys, through the completion of structured questions, take a relatively short time frame, and are quantifiable and generalizable to an entire population if the population is sampled correctly.

Surveys facilitate the collection of tremendous volume of information in a short period of time and take less time to analyse than qualitative data.

Baskin *et al* (1997:114) have defined the survey as a "careful, detailed examination of the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of members of various publics".

Babbie (1989: 237) says that surveys can be used for descriptive, exploratory and explanatory purposes. They are also used in studies where individuals constitute the main units of analysis.

3.2 Paradigm

A paradigm may be defined as a view about the world and the universe. It comprises a disciplinary matrix of ideas, practices and beliefs in which researchers and evaluators function (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:199). A paradigm provides a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the world.

A paradigm is a typical example of or pattern of something: a model. It is a world view underlying the theories and methodologies of a particular scientific subject. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979:24), "to be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way."

The interpretivist paradigm informed this study. Data gathered within the interpretivist research paradigm is primarily descriptive although, although it may be quantitative, as for

example, in sizes of living areas, coded questionnaires or documentary analysis. The emphasis is on exploration and insight rather than the mathematical treatment of data.

Research set in the interpretivist paradigm can address questions about how and why something is happening. It can address questions about what is happening in a wider context and what is likely to happen in the future- but it can seldom do so with statistical confidence, because the "truth" is not grounded in mathematical logic. The "truth" has to be a conclusion in mind of a reader (or listener), based on the researcher's power of argument. So many of the different recipients of the research may

3.3 Sample Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:9) define population as 'a complete set of individuals, cases or objects with common observable characteristics'.

The population for study was one hundred information officers serving in all government ministries and departments as public relations officers. (Source: Department of Public Communication).

The sampling frame thus consisted of all the one hundred PROs and their respective ministries/departments.

The sample size for the study was 79 as calculated below. The sample size was representative and provided sufficient data for the study.

This was based on the formula that when the population is less than 500,000 the sample frame should be 384 which is equal to 0.08% of the population (Seitel 1981: 103).

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:44) if a target population is less than 10,000, the required sample size will be smaller.

In such cases, a final sample estimate (n') is calculated using the following formula:

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + n/N}$$

$$1 + n/N$$

n' = this is the desired sample size

n = the standard sample size

N = the estimate of the population size

Which in this case

$$n = \frac{n}{1 + n/N}$$

$$nf = \frac{384}{1 + 384/100} = 79.3$$

This study used purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his or her study. Cases of subjects are therefore handpicked because they are informative or they possess the required characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:50).

3.4 Data Collection Technique

Data was collected using interview schedules and questionnaires. The interview schedule was used to collect data from key informants (five public relations officers based at the Department of Public Communications).

The key informant interview (KII) involves selecting and interviewing leaders and experts who are presumed to be knowledgeable on the field under investigation. These people are called key informants because they are assumed to have more knowledge on the subject than other members of the study population. The interview usually takes the form of an open-ended discussion in which the selected informants are encouraged to air their views on the problem or issue that is under investigation (Cutlip et al, 1994:330).

The questionnaires were self-administered after being distributed to respondents by the

researcher. The questions were both structured and unstructured to yield quantitative and qualitative data. Completed questionnaires were collected after two days

KII was selected for this study because it is less structured and would therefore provide deeper insights and assess the phenomena under investigation from different perspectives.

3.5 Pre-testing

A sample questionnaire was administered to three PROs with a view to find out if the respondents understood the questions and whether the respondents' interpretation of the question coincided with what the researcher intended to measure. The pretest sought to establish if the space provided was enough and also if the questions had a logical flow. The pretest also sought to find out if there was difficulty in constructing code categories for the questions or code responses to open ended questions.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected was systematically organised in a manner that facilitated analysis. Responses obtained from open-ended questions were categorized and assigned numbers. The raw mass of data was coded then analysed using the computer aided data analysis tool.

Data is presented descriptively in a summarized fashion using descriptive and inferential statistics. It appears in the form of displays (tables and graphs) which help in describing data and drawing conclusions.

3.7 Reliability

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

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

3.8 Validity

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. In other words, validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represent the phenomenon under study. Validity, therefore, has to do with how accurately the data obtained in the study represents the variables of the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:99).

To ensure the validity of the research process, utmost care was taken in collecting accurate and analyzing data to ensure their credibility.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1.0 Introduction

This study critically examined the performance of Public Relations Officers in government ministries and departments in Kenya with a view to investigate whether the PROs play their roles effectively, explore the factors which affect the effective practice of PR in government ministries and recommend ways of improving PR practice in government ministries.

The research was conducted in light of the rapid growth and professionalization of PR practice in Kenya.

The data was collected qualitatively through key informant interview schedules and quantitatively by self-administered questionnaires. A sample of 79 PROs was selected from a population of 100 PROs officers from all the government ministries and departments to whom questionnaires were distributed to. At least 46 questionnaires were obtained from the field. This constitutes 58.2% return rate. However, out of the 46 questionnaires, four were spoiled as most of the questions were not answered.

The responses from the remaining 42 questionnaires that were deemed useful had the responses coded and analyzed quantitatively. The results of this study are contained in the findings below.

4.2.0 Research Findings

The study sought to establish basic data about the respondents in terms of their age category, gender, highest educational levels, their of PR work experience, professional training, current post/job title, Job Group and job title before the current one.

4.2.1 Age Distribution

At least 14.3%, of respondents who participated in the study were aged between 30 and 39, 73.8% were aged between 40 and 49 years, while 11.9% were aged between 50 and 59 years. None of the participants was aged below 30 years.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of respondents by their age bracket.

Table I: Participation in Study in Percentages and Frequency by Age

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percent
20-29	0	0
30-39	6	14.3
40-49	31	73.8
50-59	5	11.9
Total	42	100

4.2.2 Gender Distribution

The study also endeavoured to establish the distribution of respondents in respect to their gender. Findings indicated that male respondents constituted 67% while female respondents account for 33%.

The figure 2 below shows the proportions of respondents by gender.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution



4.2.3 Highest Education Levels of PROs

The study also sought to determine the level of education of the respondents. At least 7.1% of respondents were Diploma holders, 35.7% were Degree holders. 11.9% Post Graduate Diploma holders while 45.2% have Masters Degrees. None of the respondents was a holder of college Certificate or Doctorate Degree

Table 2 below indicates distribution of respondents by their educational levels.

Table 2: Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	0	0
Diploma	3	7.1
Degree	15	35.7
PGD	5	11.9
Masters	19	45.4
PhD	0	0
Total	42	100

4.2.4 PR Work Experience

The study also sought to determine the level of education of the respondents. Table 3 below shows the PR work experience of the respondents.

Table 3: PR Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	18	42.8
5-10 years	13	31
11-15 years	6	14.3
16-20 years	2	4.8
Over 20 years	3	7.1
Total	42j	100

4.2.5 Job Title and Job Group

The study also sought to determine the Job Title and Job Groups of the respondents.

Table 3 below shows the Job Titles and Job Groups of the respondents. The respondents were previously referred to as Information Officers/ Public Relations Officers.

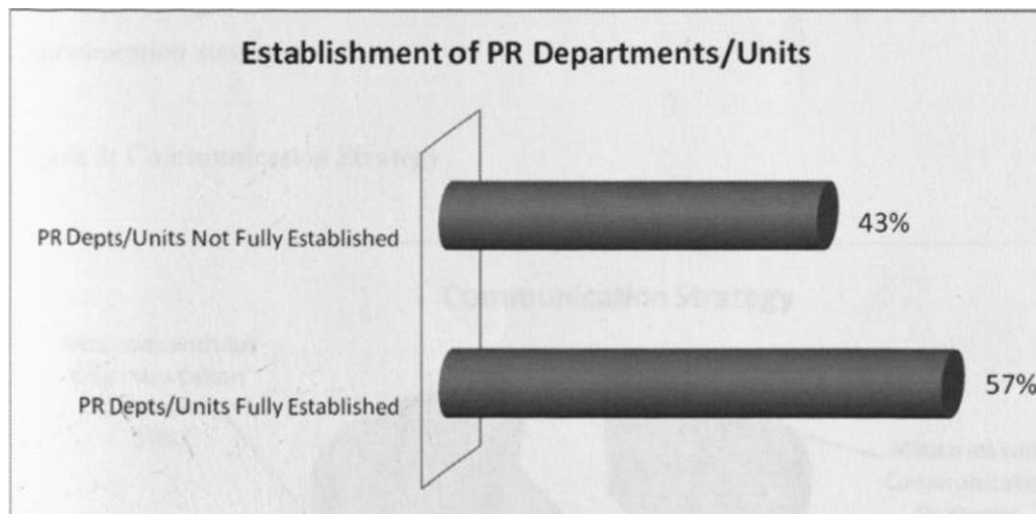
Table 4: Job Title/Job Group of respondents

Job Title	Job	Frequency	Percent
Deputy Director of Public Communication	<i>R</i>	2	4.8
Senior Assistant Director of Public Communication	<i>Q</i>	2	4.8
Assistant Director of Public Communication	<i>P</i>	6	14.3
Principal Public Communication Officer	<i>N</i>	10	23.8
Chief Public Communication Officer	<i>M</i>	16	38.1
Senior Public Communication Officer	<i>L</i>	2	7.1
Public Communication Officer	<i>J</i>	2	7.1
Total		42	100

4.2.6 Establishment of Public Relations Departments/Units

The study sought to find out from the respondents whether their **PR** departments/units were fully or partially established.

Figure 2: Establishment of PR Departments/Units



The reasons given for the partial establishment of the PR departments include lack of equipment, inadequate funding, inadequate staff, lack of support from administration, lack of appreciation of the role played by PR.

4.2.7 Number of Members of Staff

The study sought to determine the number of members of staff deployed to the various **PR** units in the various ministries/departments. Table 4 below shows the number of members of staff deployed to the various **PR** units according to the respondents.

Table 5: Staff Deployment

Number of Staff	Frequency	Percent
1	6	14.3
2	13	30.9
3	10	23.8
4	3	7.1
5	5	11.9
6	2	4.8
7	1	2.4
8	0	0
9	0	0
10	2	4.8
Total	42	100

4.2.8 Communication Strategy

The study sought to establish whether the various ministries and departments have communication strategies.

Figure 3: Communication Strategy



Reasons for lack of communication strategies included lack of policy framework, lack of financial support, inadequate staff, pressure of work and lack of support from management.

4.2.9 Appraisal

The study sought to establish if the various PR departments/units have been appraised by the external and internal publics.

Figure 4: Appraisal

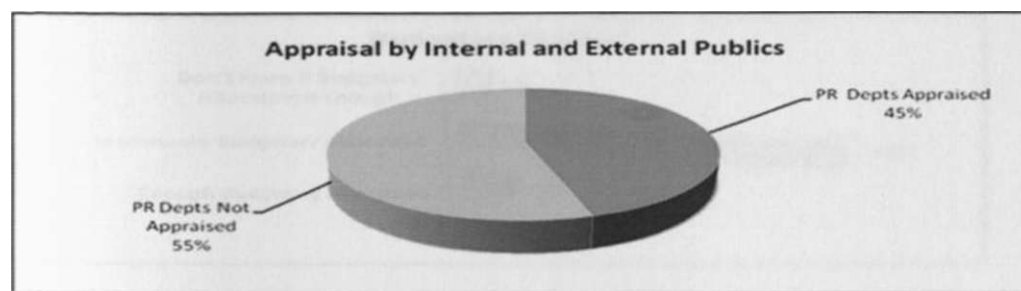


Table 6: Internal Publics' Rating as Per the Respondents

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very High	3	15.8
High	13	68.4
Average	3	15.8
Low	0	0
Very Low	0	0
Total	19	100

Table 7: External Publics' Rating as Per the Respondents

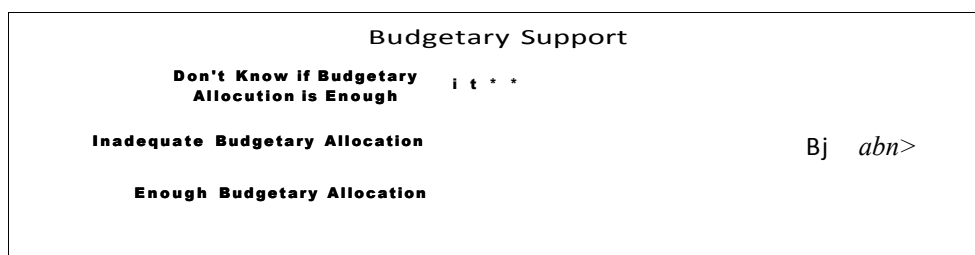
Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very High	5	26.3
High	7	36.9
Average	5	26.3
Low	2	10.5
Very Low	0	-
Total	19	100

4.3.0 Budgetary' Allocation

Some 9% of the respondents felt that their respective PR departments/units had enough budgetary support while 86% felt that the budgetary support to their respective PR departments/units was inadequate while 5% did not know whether the budgetary allocation was enough or not.

Those who said the funding of their departments/units was inadequate suggested that PR should have its own vote with its head as the Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) holder.

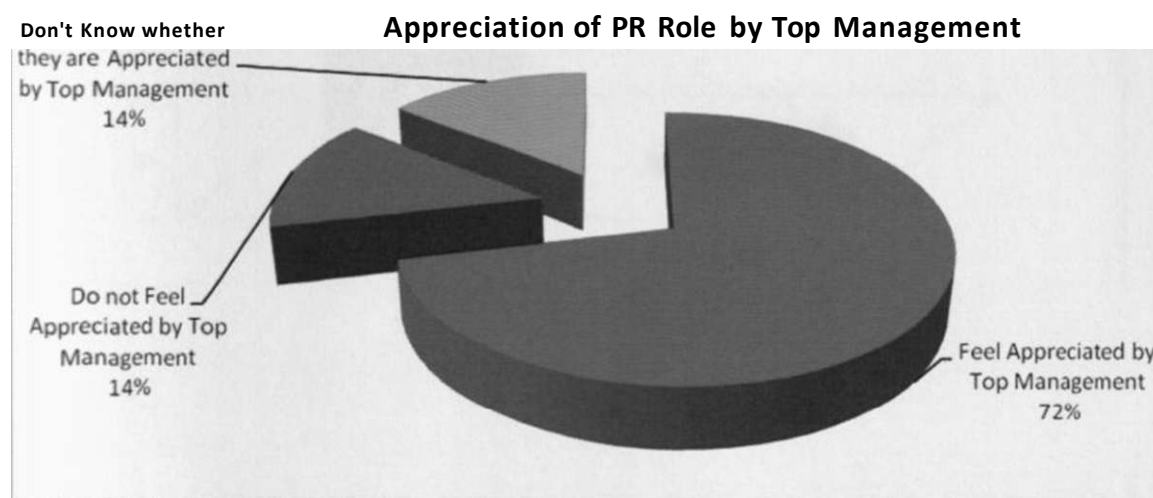
Figure 5: Budgetary Support



4.3.1 Top Management Appreciation

The study's findings indicated that 72 of the respondents felt that their role was appreciated by the top management. 14% felt that the top management did not appreciate their role while 14% did not know whether the role they played was appreciated by top management or not.

Figure 6: Top Management Appreciation



Those who felt the role they played was not recognised by top management attributed the situation to ignorance on the role/importance of PR that makes top management who treat PR as a mere auxiliary service that can be performed by any officer.

4.3.2 Impact of PR

The Study attempted to establish whether PR, according to PROs themselves, has had any impact in their respective ministries/departments.

Table 8 below shows the impact of PR in ministries and departments.

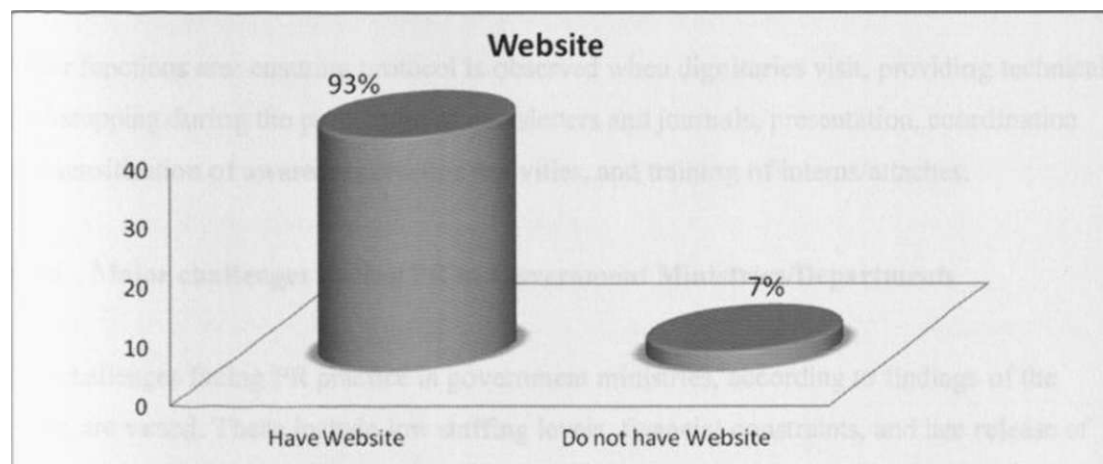
Table 8: Impact of PR

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very High	8	19.1
High	19	45.2
Average	14	33.3
Low	1	2.4
Very Low	0	0
Total	42	100

4.3.3 Website

The study found out that 93% of the ministries/departments of the respondents had websites compared to 7% whose ministries/departments did not have a website.

Figure 7: Website



4.3.4 PR Activities

The study established that PR work in government ministries mostly entail the monitoring of print and electronic media, press reviews, writing and editing articles for ministerial newsletters and other publications including supplements.

Public Relations Officers also review customer feedback, address customer complaints, supervise customer care officers, and conduct customer satisfaction surveys.

Other functions of PROs include media liaison-for coverage and organizing TV and radio talk shows for top officials, counseling management on PR matters, preparation of advertising materials, writing speeches, and preparing news and press releases.

Public Relations Officers also develop content for website, update website, design Information Education Communication (IEC) programmes, carry out publicity and advocacy of policy issues, and organize and manage ministerial events. The PROs chair publicity sub-committee meetings and also act as secretaries of other ministerial meetings.

Other functions are: ensuring protocol is observed when dignitaries visit, providing technical backstopping during the production of newsletters and journals, presentation, coordination and sensitization of awareness creation activities, and training of interns/attaches.

4.3.5 Major challenges Facing PR in Government Ministries/Departments

The challenges facing PR practice in government ministries, according to findings of the study, are varied. These include low staffing levels, financial constraints, and late release of funds for various activities, inadequate equipment like cameras, computers, and standby vehicles.

PR practice in government ministries is also challenged by the lack of a national communication policy framework, and lukewarm support of and poor understanding of the role of PR by top management/departmental heads.

The belittling and usurping of PR functions by officers from other departments especially administration and finance especially in coordinating of printing of newsletters and IEC materials for financial gain, is another challenge PR practice is faced with in government ministries and departments.

Inadequate office space, demoralization of PROs due to their lowly job groups compared to officers from other departments, lack of properly defined roles of PROs, lowly placement of PR in the management hierarchy, and too much bureaucracy that delay service delivery are other constraints faced by PR practitioners in government ministries and departments.

Other challenges include heavy workload without commensurate remuneration, unsuitable location of PR offices and scattering of relevant offices a situation that compromises communication efficiency.

43.6 Public Relations Techniques

The study found out that the most commonly used PR techniques by PR practitioners in government ministries and departments include exhibitions, interviews, speeches, fliers, brochures, newsletters, press releases, posters, website, radio and TV.

4.3.7 Ways of Improving PR Practice in Government

The respondents suggested that for PR practice in government ministries and department to improve, several measures should be undertaken.

Among these measures include the provision of adequate office space and conducive work environment for PROs.

Making PROs spokesmen of their respective ministries/departments would raise their profile, boost their morale and hence improve their performance.

The officers should be upgraded to higher job groups, services outsourced where necessary (events management, design, advertising), and senior managers sensitized on the importance of PR.

Other suggestions include the recruitment and appropriate deployment of staff to meet the

required threshold, delinking PR from administration, and providing enough funding/budgetary support and equipment.

The PROs also cited the continuous training of staff, incorporating them into key decision making organs, formulation a National Communication Policy to standardize and professionalize PR practice as key in the improvement of PR practice in their ministries and departments.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF FINDINGS

5.1.0 Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

This study was informed by use of survey research design where Public Relations Officers in government ministries and departments constituted the unit of analysis. The intention of the study was to critically examine the performance of Public Relations in government ministries. It aimed at assessing the relevance and impact of Public Relations practice in government ministries.

The specific objectives of the study was to investigate whether the PROs in government ministries play their role effectively; to explore the factors which affect the effective practice of PR in government ministries, and to recommend ways of improving PR practice in government ministries.

The study established that PROs play their role effectively. This is borne out by the ratings of their internal and external publics. Out of the 19 respondents who said that their PR departments have been appraised by their internal publics, 15.8% said their performance was rated very highly, 68.4% said their performance was rated highly while 15.8% said they were given an average rating.

On rating by external publics, 26.3% of the respondents said that their PR departments were rated very highly, 36.8% said their performance was highly rated, five 26.3% said their external public rated them average while 10.5% indicated that their performance was rated low.

The study also proved the relevance of PR practice with 72% of the respondents indicating that the top management appreciated the roles they play while only 14% felt that the top management does not appreciate their role. Another 14% did not know whether the role they played was appreciated by top management or not.

The study also found out that the impact PR practice in government ministries and departments has been enormous given that 19% of the respondents believed that PR activities have had very high impact on their ministries/departments, 45.2% of the respondents believed that PR activities have had a high impact on their organizations, 45.2% of the respondents

-believed that PR activities have had an average impact on their organizations, while only 24% believed that PR activities have had low impact on his/her organization.

The study however showed that most ministries and departments lacked communication strategies. Only 43% of the respondents said their respective ministries/department have communication strategies while 57 % of the respondents indicated that their respective ministries/department lacked communication strategies.

Reasons for lack of communication strategies included lack of a policy framework, lack of financial support by the top management, inadequate staff, and pressure of work.

The PRO's use PR techniques including exhibitions, interviews, speeches, fliers, brochures, newsletters, press releases, posters, website, radio and TV often thus implying their knowledge and professional approach to PR practice.

However, a number of factors negatively impact on the work of PROs. The study found these to include low staffing levels, financial constraints, and inadequate equipment, lack of a national communication policy framework, and lukewarm support of and poor understanding of the role of PR by top management /departmental heads.

Slow career progression, lack of properly defined roles of PROs, lowly placement of PR in the management hierarchy, and a heavy workload without commensurate remuneration also derail PR work in government, unsuitable location of PR offices and scattering of relevant offices a situation that compromises communication efficiency.

5.2.0 Relevance of the Findings

This study is premised on the fact that modern governments have used Public Relations to explain and implement their policies. PR has also become an important tool for governments following the push for good governance and fledgling democracy.

Governments have also used public relations to assist the news media in coverage of their activities. Access to information is essential for democracy since it ensures that the citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation.

This study, hopefully, will help contribute towards understanding the role of PR practice in government and appreciation of the same by top ministry officials.

The study is therefore important in pushing for the crafting of the national communication policy framework to guide in the development of communication strategies for various ministries.

5.3.0 Conclusion

The study established that Public Relations Officers in government ministries generally deliver on their duties despite some constraints. It is therefore imperative to encourage and facilitate them to perform even better in order to continue to build a positive image of government and publicize government development agenda and policies among the citizenry.

5.4.0 Recommendations

The study also recommends that officers deployed as PROs should be at least of the rank of Principal Public Communication Officer (Job Group 'N') to enhance their confidence, stature and bargaining power as their counterparts in administration, finance, and human resource departments.

Public Relations departments/units should also be well funded, preferably by having their own vote with the head as the AIE holder, to enable PROs discharge their duties effectively and professionally.

The study further recommends that PROs be made the official spokesperson of their respective departments or ministries to accord them the opportunity to expound on policy matters and engage more with the citizenry.

The study recommends that further research be done on the relevance and impact of PR practice in government. It also recommends that research be carried out to find out the linkage between the lack of a national communication policy framework and the formulation of communication strategies by various ministries.

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Appendix i
QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Milton Omondi. I am undertaking a research on the performance of Public Relations Officers in government ministries in Kenya in partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Arts (MA) degree in Communication Studies at the School of Journalism, University of Nairobi.

Please spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Kindly tick or answer the questions correctly.

Do not write your name. Any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Participation in this research is voluntary

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender

(a) Male []

(b) Female []

2. Age Bracket

(a) 20-29 years []

(b) 30-39 years []

(c) 40-49 years []

(d) 50- 59 years []

3. Highest Education Level

(a) Certificate []

(b) Diploma []

(c) Degree []

(d) Post Graduate Diploma []

(e) Masters []

(f) PhD []

4. Professional training (if any)

5 PR work experience

- <a) Less than 5 years []
- (b) 5- 10 years []
- (c) 11-15 years []
- (d) 16-20 years []
- (e) Over 20 years []

6. Current Post/Job Title

7. Job Group

S. Other job title held before the current one

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Is *Je PR section in your department/ministry fully established?

10. If no, why?

11. How many members of staff does the PR unit have?

12. Enumerate the day to day activities of the PR section in your department/ministry

(a)

(b)

!c)

d)

(e)

(0

(g)

13. Outline the major challenges that you face in the course of performing your duties

(a)

0>

(c)

id)

(e)

(0



4 Does your department/ministry have a communication strategy?

Yes [] No []

15. If yes, did you participate in developing it?

16. If no, why?

7. Has the PR unit ever been appraised by internal and external publics? (Customer Satisfaction)

Yes [] No []

18. If yes, indicate how it was rated by

(a) Internal publics

Very High [] High [] Average [] Low [] Very Low []

(b) External publics

(c) Very High [] High [] Average [] Low [] Very Low []

19. Does your department/ministry have a website? Yes [] No []

20. What PR technique does your department use

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

21. Is the budgetary allocation to the PR department adequate?

Yes [] No [] Don't Know []

22. If no, what steps can be taken to remedy the situation?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

23. Do the top **and line** manager **appreciate**/recognize the role of the **PR** department in your ministry?

Yes [**J** No [] Don't Know []

24. If no, why?

(a)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(0

(g)

25. In your own opinion, rate impact that the PR department has had in your ministry/department

Very High [] High [] Average [] Low [] Very Low []

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

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(0

(g)

(h)

Thank you for participating in this study

Appendix ii
Interview Guide for Key Informants

1. What is the role of Public Relations Officers in government ministries and departments?
2. What challenges do the PROs face in the course of their work?
3. How do the top management in various ministries and organizations view PR?
4. Is there a National Communication Policy in place? If no, how has that affected PR practice in government ministries and departments?
5. How can PR practice in government be improved?