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**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HEALTH  
ORGANIZATIONS - A CASE STUDY OF AIC  
KIJABE HOSPITAL**

BY  
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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF  
DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION  
STUDIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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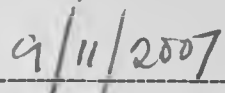
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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

  
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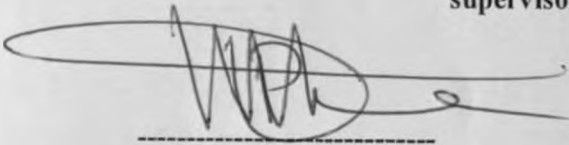
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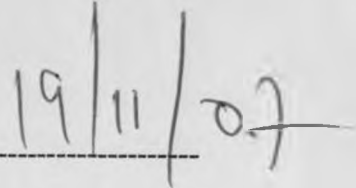
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This research project has been submitted with my approval as university supervisor.

  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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**Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to my lovely wife, Wambui and our wonderful children, Nyambura, Gaitho and Wangai. You are the reason I live.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Believe me when I say that I am clapping, but since manuscripts do not have loudspeakers, you cannot hear me. I am giving a standing ovation and a thunderous applause to:

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My children, Nyambura, Gaitho and Wangai; may you live to be God fearing and great scholars.

My dear wife, Wambui; for being patient with me, I will always love you.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine the role public relations plays in the management of health organization. Public relations has been muddled in confusion with many organizations unaware of its importance in the success of the organization as it seeks to be understood by various publics. Public relations has not been recognized as a critical management function by organizations. It has not been placed properly and therefore has been approached in a haphazard and disorganized manner. These factors created a concern and stimulated interest to venture into this research.

The study was guided by two research questions that were generated at the conceptual stage of the study. It was descriptive and employed questionnaires as data collection instrument. This instrument was supplemented by documentary evidence and IEC materials posted at AIC Kijabe Hospital. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages).

The major finding of the study was that the role of public relations as a management tool was not well defined. It was disorganized and haphazardly done. More specifically, the study found out that:

- There were no professional PR personnel at AIC Kijabe Hospital. This meant that the task of handling PR activities was in the hands other managers who lacked capacity in PR management.
- AIC Kijabe Hospital lacked a PR plan and policy. PR activities lacked specific objectives hence their management was in an ad hoc basis.
- The organization lacked a communication strategy to reach out to its various publics.

Based on the findings, the study concluded that in order for AIC Kijabe Hospital to remain relevant and be understood by its various publics, there was need for the organization to set up a comprehensive and well integrated PR strategy. The study recommended that:

- AIC Kijabe Hospital requires to establish a Public Relations and Communication Department in its management hierarchy.
- That the department thus established be headed by a Public Relations and Communications Director. The director will sit in management meetings and report directly to the Executive Director.
- The department will come up with a PR policy document to guide all PR activities at the organization. The department will also be the link between the organization and its publics.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AIC</b>	African Inland Church
<b>AAR</b>	African Air Rescue
<b>NHIF</b>	National Hospital Insurance Fund
<b>PRM</b>	Public Relations Manager
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>CDC</b>	Center for Disease Control
<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education and Communication
<b>AIM</b>	African Inland Mission
<b>NASCOP</b>	National AIDS and STI Control Programme
<b>ACU</b>	AIDS Control Unit
<b>KEMRI</b>	Kenya Medical Research Institute
<b>KEMSA</b>	Kenya Medical Supplies Agency

# CHAPTER ONE

## **1.1 Background to the Study**

Public relations are a crucial management function. As a distinctive management function, it helps in establishing and maintaining mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its various publics. PR is about influencing public opinion in order for an organization to gain a favourable image in the eyes of the public. To achieve this, an organization should have a well organized public relations strategy.

A well thought out and planned PR strategy will go a long way in making the organization more understood by its publics and for the organization to understand its publics. Public relations will conceive themes and organizations, advice the management, deal with conflicts, survey attitudes, and promote good employer-employee relations.

Public relations is compounded of the social sciences, which teaches how individuals and groups react, and the science of communications, which provides the means of resolving conflicts and establishing contact and mutual understanding. It encompasses all forms of communication that an organization uses to win the goodwill, support, confidence and trust of its publics (Black 1972).

Seitel (1987) indicates that PR practitioners once operated at the lowest management levels in many organizations. Over the years, this has changed and today, a wise company puts a PR Professional right in the inner circle of the management. The Public

Relations Officer (PRO) or Corporate Communications Director reports directly to the top management. He/ she is at first tier management where he/ she will know what the management thought is in public issues. On the other hand, the PR practitioner is expected to keep tabs on what the public is thinking and their attitude towards the organization, its services and products. By gauging the public's attitude, he/she will be in a position to make decisions and strategize on how to react to them. Whatever he/she discovers is passed on to the management for appropriate action to be taken.

The basic ingredients required for an organization's existence and success includes public support, trust, goodwill and confidence. It is the duty of the PR department to devise strategies of communicating to the diverse publics of an organization. These publics are divided into two: internal (employees) and external (clients, neighbours, media, government, stock holders. The needs and expectations of these publics are always changing. It is the responsibility of the PR department to carry out research to discover what the publics' requirements are at a particular time and act swiftly to fill in the gap as expected by the public.

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"These are both exiting and challenging times for business. All skills require a well managed business under normal highly competitive market conditions. Organizations today face numerous, varied and sometimes disruptive political and social agendas that affect every aspect of an organization."- Nielsen (2006)

Health organizations are in constant contact with various publics: the government, the community at large, suppliers, clients, patients and their visitors, mass media, neighbours, and employees. They therefore require a comprehensive and well integrated public relations strategy to reach out to these publics. PR, when planned strategically and executed well can add value to a health organization by helping it better employ people,

which would provide a good return to shareholders and deliver products and service value to customers (Black 1972).

Health organizations, though classified as social services providers rather than strictly business entities, have a responsibility of fostering health consciousness through health education by providing opportunities for participation of people in the health organizations. This, according to Basavanthappa (2005) makes health institutions not to be considered in isolation from other socio-economic factors. Health service providers work directly with the community and hence provide a direct service to people at the grassroots level. Health providers utilize community resources and should encourage community participation in self-help organizations at local level.

Health organizations in the developed world long recognized the importance of public relations as an important management function. In Kenya, the Ministry of Health headquarters has a PR department and so are hospitals like Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi Hospital, Agha Khan Hospital, Mater Hospital, and health services providers like KEMSA, NHIF, and AAR among many others.

A hospital's public relations department deals with medical staff, employees, volunteers, its patients, visitors, management board, the media, government agencies and the community. The department evaluates the attitudes of these different groups through research and develops a communication strategy to help each of them understand the hospital.

Since 1915 when it was established, AIC Kijabe Hospital has developed from a small medical clinic into a large, tertiary teaching and referral hospital. It not only serves the local community but the whole country and some neighbouring countries. Currently, the

statistics provided in the AIC Kijabe Hospital's 2005 Annual Report, the various hospital departments came into contact with over 190,000 patients of different categories.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

AIC Kijabe Hospital is one of the major Mission hospitals in Kenya. Since its establishment in 1915, the hospital has developed from a small medical clinic into a large, tertiary, teaching and referral hospital. It now serves not only the local community but the larger Kenyan community and surrounding countries. Currently, the Hospital has a 210 bed capacity and a staff establishment of over 400. From the hospital statistics provided in the AIC Kijabe Hospital's 2005 Annual Report, the various hospital departments came into contact with over 190,000 patients of different categories.

But all is not well at the hospital. According to one senior manager, the hospital has had a high employee turnover in the recent years due to what he described as lack of a proper employee communication strategy. Customer dissatisfaction is rampant with patients and visitors complaining of unexplained delays and long queues. The hospital has therefore been losing out to neighbouring hospitals like Nazareth Hospital, PCEA Kikuyu Hospital, and hospitals within Nairobi.

In view of the pivotal role played by PR in the success of an organization, it was the intention of this study to find out the role communication and public relations plays in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital.

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the roles and functions of public relations in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital?
2. What place and position has PR been given at AIC Kijabe Hospital?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the role PR plays in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital. To this end, the study had the following specific objectives:

1. To establish PR techniques and strategies utilized at AIC Kijabe Hospital.
2. To find out the place and position of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital.
3. To establish the functions of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital.
4. To find out how PR is managed and organized at AIC Kijabe Hospital.

## **1.4 Assumptions of the Study**

This study assumed that:

- Management at AIC Kijabe Hospital was aware of the critical role played by PR in any organization.
- That PR is an essential management tool critical to the success of a health organization.
- That all respondents would give adequate and objective information.
- There are PR activities at AIC Kijabe Hospital.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It was hoped that the findings of this study would:

1. Contribute to the existing body of knowledge on PR management function in health organizations.

2. Provide information to the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital and other health organizations the core tools of PR management which includes: planning, coordinating, directing, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the organizations will achieve their goals in a cost effective way.
3. Little has been written about PR management in health organizations in Kenya. It was therefore imperative that a study like this be carried out to pave way for further research.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study confined itself to examining the role public relations plays in the management of health organizations. It was conducted in AIC Kijabe Hospital. The population of the study was the management hierarchy at the hospital, employees and clients of the hospital.

### **1.6.1 Limitations of the Study**

Ideally, the researcher would have wished to carry out a study in government and private hospitals besides the AIC Kijabe Hospital which is a mission hospital. The researcher also appreciated that there were still other sources that could have offered valuable information regarding the purpose of this research. Whereas an interview schedule with key informant group would have yielded in-depth data, questionnaires were used for data collection. These limitations, however, did not make the study any less important. It only implied that though the findings of the study may hold true of other places, they need not be applied indiscriminately but rather with caution.



## 1.7 Definition of Significant Terms

**Organization:** a group of people identified by shared interests and purpose.

**Hospital:** an institution where people receive medical, surgical, or psychiatric treatment and nursing care.

**Management:** refers to the process of setting and achieving goals through planning, organizing, controlling, directing, evaluating and coordinating in an organization or institution.

**Public relations:** the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizations leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section consisted of a presentation and discussion of literature related to public relations management function in organizations with a bias to health organizations. The section was divided into:

- History and evolution of public relations
- Public relations and its publics
- Public relations as a management function
- Public relations activities in health organizations
- The role and place of public relations in health organizations in Kenya
- Public relations at AIC Kijabe Hospital
- Summary of reviewed literature
- Theoretical framework

#### **2.2 History of Public Relations**

##### **2.2.1 Public Relations Defined**

Various Public Relations Professional Organizations and public relations practitioners have made efforts over the years to develop a succinct yet thorough definition of public relations. Baran (2004) defines public relations as the management function that focuses on the relationships and communications that individuals and organizations have with other groups (called publics) for the purpose of creating mutual goodwill.

Jefkins (1998) indicates that public relations is about creating understanding through knowledge and this often involves effecting change. Public relations is a form of communication.

Black (1972) defines public relations as the establishment of two-way communication to resolve conflicts of interest by seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest and establishment of understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information.

The most accepted definition of public relations was offered by The World Assembly of Public Relations Associates in Mexico City in August 1978: "Public relations practice is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizations leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest." (Jefkins 1998)

Black (1972) says that public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.

### **2.2.2 Early Public Relations**

Baran (2004) indicates that archeologists in Iraq have uncovered a tablet dating from 1800BC. It provided farmers with information on sowing, irrigating and harvesting their crops. Julius Ceaser fed the people of the Roman Empire constant reports of his achievements to maintain morale and solidify his reputation and position of power. Genghis Khan would send "advance men" to tell stories of his might, hoping to frighten his enemies into surrendering.

Public relations campaigns abounded in America and helped create colonies. Earlier settlers in the Americas would tell overstatements, half truths and lies to entice more settlers from Europe to the New World. The Boston Tea Party was a well organized media event organized to attract public attention for a good cause. It was a good attempt for a pseudo-event.

George Washington employed the public relations acumen of Mason Weems in 1800 to burnish his reputation in a glowing and often fictitious bibliography "*The Father of Our Country.*"

In these examples, people and organizations used communication to inform, to build an image and to influence public opinion. In its earlier stages, PR was associated more with propaganda than with useful information hence acquiring a deceitful, huckster image.

In 1889 Westinghouse Electric established the first corporate public relations department to ensure that the company positions were always clear and in the public eye. Pioneer PR practitioner, Ivy Ledbetter Lee came to the aid of the railroad industry beset by accidents and strikes. He escorted reporters to the scene of trouble, established press centers, and distributed press releases and assisted reporters in obtaining additional information and photographs.

PR campaigns continued to take root in World War 1 spearheaded by George Creel in America. It was Edward Bernays who began to emphasize the value of assessing the public's feelings towards an organization. PR professionals began representing their various publics to their clients just as they represented their clients to those publics.

Baran (2004) states that several factors have contributed into shaping the identity of PR, influencing the way the industry does its job, and clarify the necessity for PR in any organization. These include:

- Advances in technology made possible mass production, distribution and marketing of goods. Communication technology made it possible to communicate more efficiently and effectively with the ever larger and more specific audiences.
- Growth of the middle class which was better educated and more aware of the world around it, require information about people and organizations.
- Growth of organizations; as organizations grew bigger, the public saw them as more powerful and more remote. People became curious and suspicious about these organizations that seemed to influence all aspects of their lives.
- Better research tools were developed with sophisticated research methodologies and statistical techniques. This allowed organizations to better judge the effectiveness of PR campaigns.
- Professionalization; numerous national and international PR organizations helped to professionalize the industry and clean up its reputation.

## 2.3 Public Relations and its Publics

Public relations practitioners interact with seven different categories of publics according to Baran (2004). These are:

1. **Employees**; good PR begins at home with this group. Newsletters, social events, internal and external recognition of superior performance makes employees feel at ease and motivated to work.

2. **Stockholders;** they own an organization. Their goodwill is necessary for the business to operate. An establishment like AIC Kijabe Hospital which is owned by the African Inland Church (AIC), the church leadership requires annual reports and meetings which provide a sense of belonging as well as information.
3. **Communities;** an organization has neighbours where it operates. Courtesy requires that an organization's neighbours be treated with friendship and support. A health organization can hold information meetings, offer free clinics to neighbours once in a while, subsidize some services to strengthen ties between the organization and its neighbours.
4. **Media;** trust and goodwill of professionals within the mass media will help the organization communicate with its various publics. For example, the annual Mater Hospital Heart Run receives good media coverage in Kenya since the organizers have built trust and goodwill with the media.
5. **Government;** it is the "voice of the people." It deserves the attention of any organization that deals with the public. Organizations must earn and maintain the goodwill and trust of the government. Health organizations, be they private or public must work closely with the government in disseminating the government's health policy. Posted at various hospital notice boards are IEC materials generated by the Ministry of Health, WHO, CDC etc. The government often uses facilities of private hospitals to provide services like polio and measles jabs. All births and deaths occurring in health institutions must be registered with the registrar of persons. This creates a mutual understanding between the government and health organizations.

6. **Investment community**; organizations are under constant scrutiny of those who invest their own money, invest other peoples money or make recommendations of investments. An organization must earn respect and trust in these people. PR efforts build an organization's good image with that community. For example, AIC Kijabe Hospital, being a mission, non profit making organization receives donations in terms of money and materials form individuals, AIC church, African Inland Mission (AIM), Chosen International, Help the World, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Samaritan Purse among other donors. To earn their trust and respect, the organization must maintain a positive goodwill from those donors. Some of the hospital's staff are volunteer missionary doctors who invest their time, resources and training to offer services at the hospital.
7. **Customers**; they pay the bills for health organizations through purchase of products or services. Their goodwill is of paramount importance.

Jefkins (1998) states that publics are groups of people, internal or external that an organization communicates with. Public relations activities are aimed at carefully selected groups of people who are subdivisions of the greater general public. He identifies ten publics with which an organization communicates at one time or the other:

- the community
- employees
- potential employees
- suppliers of services and materials
- investors
- distributors

- consumers and users
- opinion leaders
- trade unions
- the media
- the government

## 2.4 Public Relations Activities

According to Microsoft Encarta Premium Suite (2005) public relations is a management function that creates, develops and carries out policies and programmes to influence public opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product or an organization. PR keeps management informed of changes in the opinion of groups whose support is needed: employees, shareholders, customers, suppliers, dealers, the community at large and the government.

Baran (2004) lists the following as some of the activities and functions of PR:

- **Counseling;** PR practitioners offer routine advice to an organization's management concerning policies, relationships and communication with its various publics. Center and Jackson (2002) says that when a policy decision has been made, managers must understand and agree that it should be implemented, then it is passed to the employees and when need arises, other publics are made aware. This is the work of PR.
- **Development and fund raising;** organizations survive through voluntary contributions in time and money of their members, friends, employees and supporters. PR helps to demonstrate the need for those contributions.



*"An organization's reputation, profitability and even its continued existence can depend on the degree to which its targeted "publics" support its goals and policies. Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses and build and maintain positive relationships with the public." [WWW.bls.gov](http://WWW.bls.gov)*

- **Media relations;** media outlets have increased and so are advances in media technology. This makes them more complex to deal with. PR helps management to understand various media, preparation and organization of materials for them and in placing those materials.
- **Special events and public participation;** PR is used to stimulate interest in an organization through well planned activities designed to facilitate interaction between an organization and its publics.
- **Employee communication;** Center and Jackson (2002) indicate that to promote positive external PR, an organization must have a sound internal PR. A satisfied and enthusiastic employee is an extremely effective and credible PR person. Employees want to know the direction the organization is headed, why it is heading that way and the role they have to play towards that particular direction.

Jefkins (1998) provides the following as a brief summary of the roles and activities of a PR manager and staff (the list is not exhaustive).

1. Writing and distributing news releases.
2. Editing and producing staff magazines and organizing other forms of internal communication like video tapes, slide presentations, bulletin boards, etc.

3. Editing and producing print like educational literature, company history, annual reports, induction literature for new staff, etc.
4. Organizing PR exhibitions and displays.
5. Commissioning and maintaining forms of corporate identity and house styling such as logos, colour schemes, print house styles and typography, livery of vehicles, distinctive clothing etc.
6. Attending at appropriate meetings of the board and meetings of marketing, sales and other executives.
7. Representation of the company at trade association meetings.
8. Commissioning opinion surveys.

All these activities and more have to be fitted into a planned PR programme and conducted within an agreed budget. This makes PR a management function as discussed in the next section.

## **2.5 PR as a Management Function**

As management in many companies, big or small, as well as the Government embraces the interactive nature and value of Public Relations (PR), it must be noted that success is seldom accidental. PR helps craft strategic plans that contribute to efficiency, profitability and overall success of whoever uses this management tool effectively (Daily Nation, June 17, 2007)

Robinson (1966) asserts that public relations practitioner is a part of management function of the organization he is associated. There is an intimate relationship between public relations and the success of the organization's goals and mission. As a member of the organization team, the public relations practitioner's role is to:

1. Measure, evaluate and interpret the attitudes of various relevant publics.
2. Assist the management in defining objectives for increasing public understanding and acceptance of the organization's products and services.
3. Equate these objectives with interests, needs, and goals of the various relevant publics.
4. Develop, execute and evaluate a program to earn public understanding and acceptance.

There is a public relations angle to every aspect of management. PR is a distinctive management function that helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics. (Black 1972, Seitel 1987)

It is a foregone conclusion that the management of an organization needs to be aware of values and attitudes of its various publics for the organization to achieve its goals. Public relations as a management function will encompass anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact on the organization, for good or for bad.

***“Public relations advise management on the impact of any action-or lack of action- on the behaviour of the target audience.” Microsoft Encarta Premium Suite-2005***

Key to public relations as a management function according to Basavanthappa (2005) is:

- **Planning**; working out a broad outline of things to be done and methods of doing them to accomplish the purpose set for the enterprise.
- **Organizing**; establishing formal structures of authority through which work of subdivisions are arranged, defined and coordinated for the defined objectives.

- **Staffing**; the whole personnel function of bringing and training the staff and maintaining favourable conditions of work.
- **Directing**; continuous task of making decisions and embodying them for the guidance of staff.
- **Co-coordinating**; interrelating the various parts of the work and eliminating conflicts.
- **Reporting**; keeping those to whom the executive is responsible informed as to what is going on through records, research and inspection.
- **Budgeting**; fiscal planning, accounting and control.

Black (1972) states that management of organizations need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics to achieve institutional goals. A public relations practitioner will act as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action.

According to Baran (2004) public relations as a management function anticipates, analyzes and interprets issues that might impact the operations and plans of the organization. Public relations researches to find out who the organization's publics are, what they want and how they want it.

*“The role of the public relations member of the management team is that of innovator, catalyst, conscience and the inward and outward Seeing Eye.”*

(Black 1972)

This “seeing eye” means that there has to be someone at a senior level in the management team who should be keeping a constant watch on the effects of company policies on the

outside world. Equally important is the necessity to monitor the climate within and without the organization.

Black (1972) says that the management team has a corporate responsibility, but special tasks or responsibilities are normally assigned by the managing director to the various members of his team. Production, sales, and financial control are essential parts of management, but public relations tends to flow over the whole gamut of business and management. In theory, Black says that each director is capable of handling elements of PR applicable to his specialized field. This is however unlikely true in practice. It is more efficient to leave public relations to the professional expert, thus permitting the other directors to concentrate on their own spheres of work.

The above presupposes that the board or executive committee will include a public relations member. This is highly desirable since communications and other public relations considerations are vital aspects of successful management. (See figure 1 on AIC Kijabe Hospital organizational structure)

Black (1972) says that a company cannot decide whether or not it will *have* public relations since it is omnipresent and ubiquitous, but it is desirable to take all necessary steps to achieve “good” public relations throughout the company’s organization and activities.

It should be noted that public relations has had a nebulous definition. It has suffered from being misunderstood with other closely related functions like advertising, marketing, and propaganda. It would only serve right if public relations is distinguished from these other functions.

Jefkins (1998) defines advertising as the 'art of presenting the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost.' While PR relates to all the communications of the total organization, advertising is mainly limited to the marketing function. Marketing has the task of seeking and stimulating buyers for a firm's outputs, be they goods or services. Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) defines marketing as 'the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably,' (Jefkins 1998). Propaganda, on the other hand is the means of achieving and gaining support for an opinion, creed or belief. Propaganda lacks credibility and is liable to invite suspicion or disagreement, qualities that PR cannot afford to have.

## **2.6 Role and Place of PR in Health Organizations in Kenya**

Seital (1987) indicates that there is a lot of competition in health care provision. For a hospital to succeed in its objectives and plans, it has to be properly "positioned" through PR efforts. These efforts will include educating hospital publics through such services as "open houses" that demonstrate and explain services, sponsorship of health and medical events and seminars. The hospital can also distribute health related information through newspaper columns, radio spot announcements, TV interviews and telephone hot lines. A hospital can also increase its community interaction and improve its relation with the community which is a key aspect in hospital PR.

Not much has been written on public relations on health organizations in Kenya, unlike in the West where PR long became an essential management tool of health management. One can say that PR has not been given its rightful place in many health organizations in

Kenya. At the Ministry of Health, there exists a skeleton staff that handles PR issues. The department is poorly established, lacks a resource center and many of its activities are haphazard. Much of the Ministry of health communication issues are handled by different departments that are associated with the ministry like NASCOP, NACC, ACU, KEMRI, CDC among others.

Health organizations like Mater Hospital, NHIF, Kenyatta National Hospital, Agha Khan Hospital, KEMSA and AAR have established departments that handle PR issues. At Mater Hospital for example PR has been handled by Customer Service Department since 2001. It was only in 2006 that the Hospital established a PR department. This department, according to the Public Relations Manager (PRM) is inadequately staffed and has very little budget to carry out its activities. It would appear that the management of the hospital is yet to appreciate the full role of PR, “PR has not been accorded the place it deserves,” says the PRM.

It is a little different at AAR where the PR department is well established, well staffed and has a fairly good budget to carry out its activities. The PRM reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer and sits in management meetings.

As part of public relations activities, health organizations in Kenya stage events that are also captured by the local media. These includes Mater Heart Run (Mater Hospital), Heart to Heart Run (Karen Hospital), Medical Train (Avenue Health Care), cleft lip operations (Kenyatta National hospital) etc.

## 2.7 PR Activities at Kijabe Hospital

At AIC Kijabe hospital, some of the PR activities the hospital has been engaged in include: Free and subsidized medical outreaches in the neighbouring areas and beyond, HIV/AIDS Relief Program and public education on various health issues. The hospital is also involved in production of teaching videos about hydrocephalus, *spina bifida*, cleft lips and other disabilities to parents with such children. The well stocked hospital library is also open to members of the surrounding community (AIC Kijabe Hospital-2005 Annual Report)

The hospital also produces a comprehensive annual report to be distributed among its various publics. It also publishes a full colour calendar which is also beautifully designed. In 2005, the hospital developed its mission statement and motto. The mission statement reads:

***“With God’s help and to His glory, AIC Kijabe Hospital seeks to provide excellence in compassionate health care, education and spiritual ministry in the name of Jesus Christ”***

The hospital’s motto is:

***“Health care to God’s Glory”***

The mission statement and motto are strategically placed at the hospital’s entrance. The hospital has also provided television sets in the reception and waiting areas for patients’ entertainment as they wait for services. Public address system announces clients’ names to ease communication. In the various bulletin boards, health IEC materials are well positioned. Some originate from the Ministry of Health, CDC, NASCOP, NAACP among



others. However, some handwritten materials are poorly designed and have a few grammatical errors.

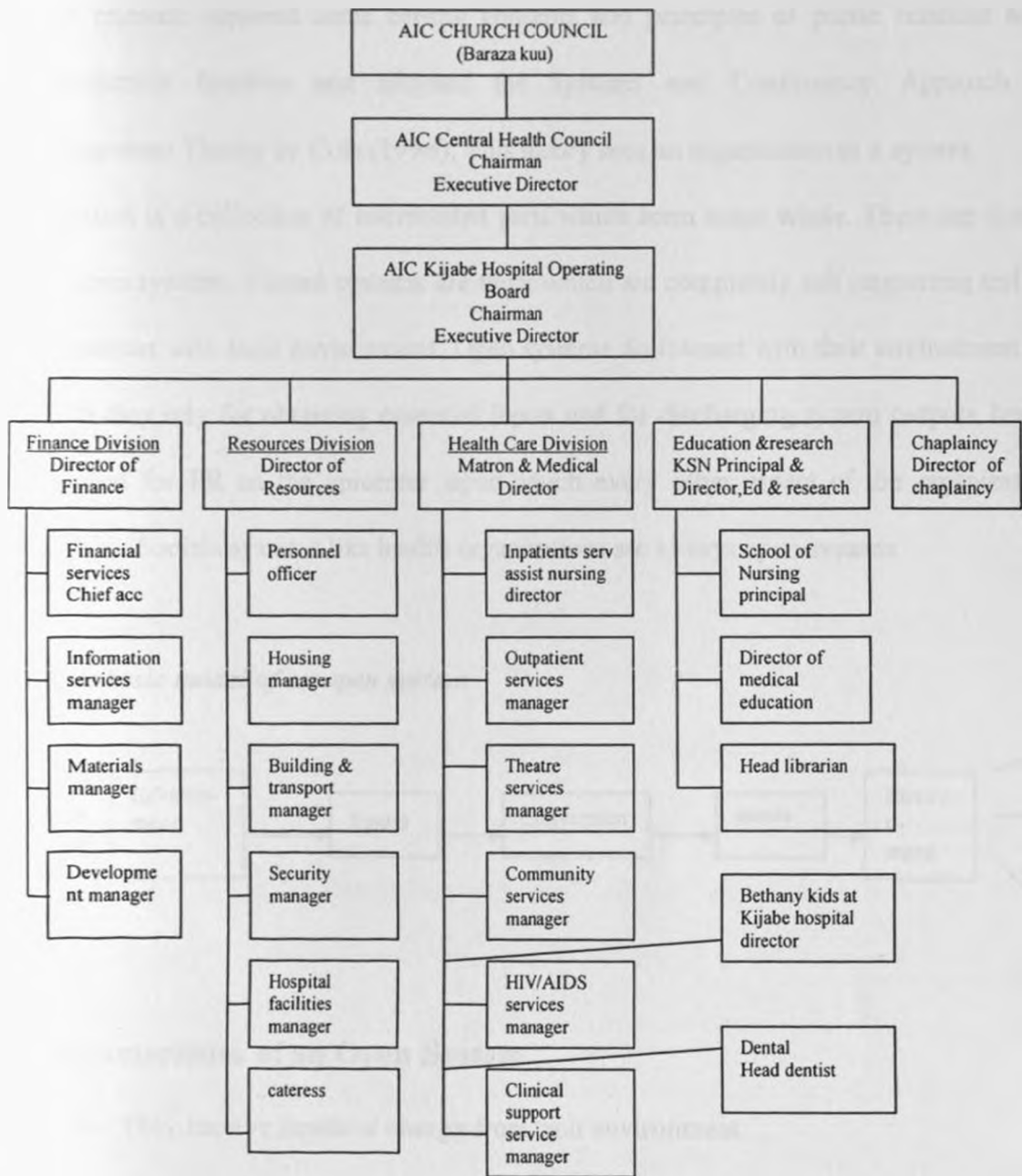
At various places are suggestion boxes. Religious tracts are also made available. In one of the boxes is a questionnaire for a service delivery survey the hospital is conducting. The hospital has no distinct corporate colours. All its vehicles however sport white and blue colours.

## **2.8 Summary of Reviewed Literature**

Literature reviewed has shown that public relations is a management function. It is unfortunate that some organizations have not accorded PR the right recognition as an integral part of management or mistake it with other functions like marketing, advertising and propaganda.

There is need to recognize PR as the only way for organizations to be understood by their publics and for the organizations to understand their publics. There is an existing gap in research knowledge with regard to public relations in health organizations. This is the gap that this study intends to fill.

**Fig 1: AIC Kijabe Hospital Organizational Structure**

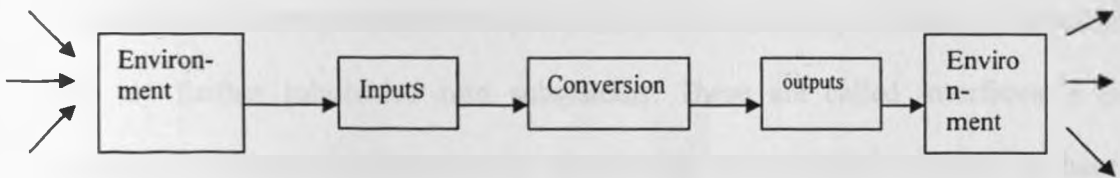


## 2.9 Theoretical Framework

This research explored some central concepts and principles of public relations as a management function and adopted the Systems and Contingency Approach to Management Theory by Cole (1996). This theory sees an organization as a system.

A system is a collection of interrelated parts which form some whole. There are closed and open systems. Closed systems are those which are completely self supporting and do not interact with their environment. Open systems do interact with their environment on which they rely for obtaining essential inputs and for discharging system outputs, hence the need for PR as the epicenter upon which every other aspect of the organization revolves. Social systems like health organizations are always open systems.

*Fig 2: basic model of an open system*



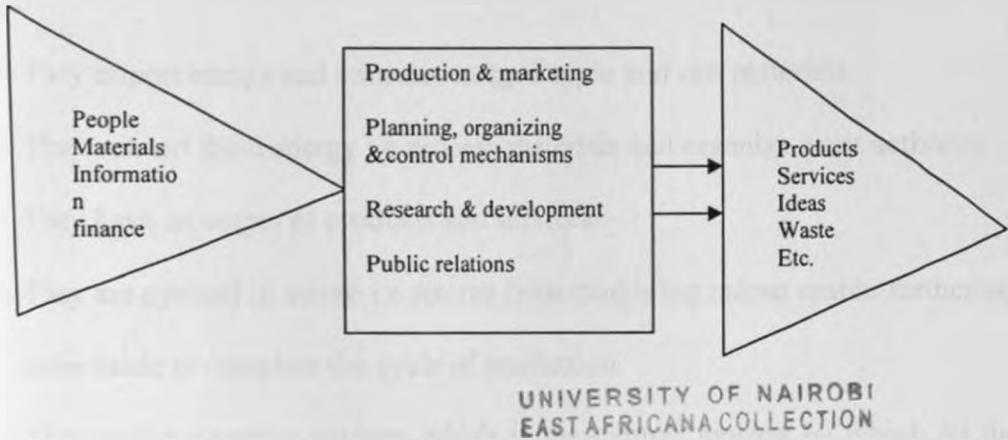
### Characteristics of an Open System

- They receive inputs or energy from their environment.
- They convert these inputs into outputs.
- They discharge their outputs into the environment.

In an organization, inputs include: people, materials, information, and finance. These inputs are organized and activated so as to convert human skills and raw materials into

products, services and other outputs which are discharged into the environment as shown in diagram 3.

**Fig 3: The Conversion Process**



**Inputs**

**Conversion**

**Outputs**

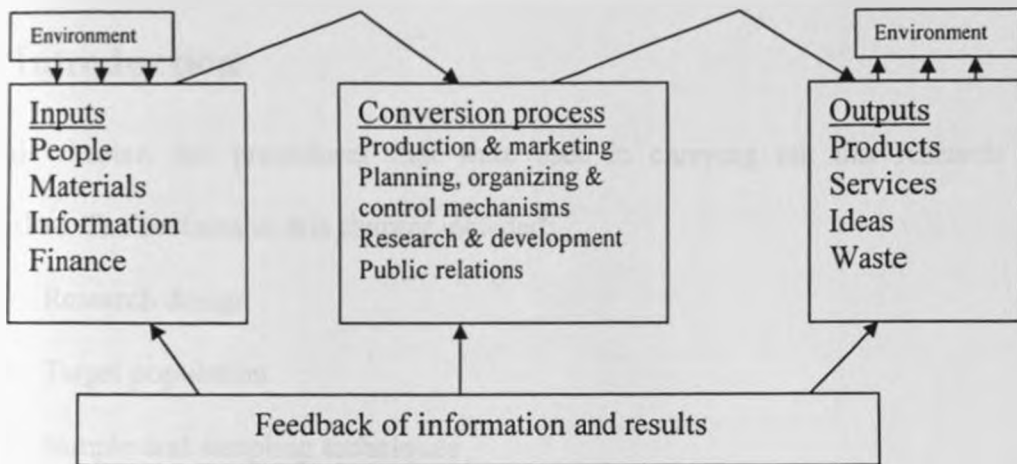
Open systems are interdependent with the environment which may or may not be stable. Systems are further subdivided into subsystems. These are called interfaces in an organization. Boundaries of subsystems in organization are not visible and they are based in relationships. Cole (1996) says that in an organization, some employees work at the external boundary. They deal with inputs and outputs directly, for example, raising capital, purchasing from suppliers, identifying customer requirements, those responsible for sales, distributions etc. PR comes in handy for this group of employees dealing with external publics.

Other employees work on internal boundaries i.e interfaces between various subsystems of the organization for example, accountants, personnel, office managers etc. to this group of employees, PR will be invaluable in dealing with these internal publics.

Katz and Khan (1966) in Cole (1996) identify the following as characteristics of open systems:

- They import energy and stimulation eg. People and raw materials.
- They convert these energy i.e process materials and organize work activities.
- They have an output of products and services.
- They are cyclical in nature i.e returns from marketing output enable further inputs to be made to complete the cycle of production.
- They suffer negative entropy which is the natural process by which all things tend to break down or die.
- They receive feedback. Negative feedback in particular enables the system to correct deviations. Negative feedback acts like a thermostat to enable the system keep on course and remain in a steady state.

**Fig 4: Basic Cycle of Organizational System**



- Consequences of the outputs are information and results.
- Information can be in terms of sales volume, new orders, market share, customer complaints etc. this information can be applied to control the outputs and conversion process as appropriate.
- Results are revenues and profits which are fed back into the organization to provide further inputs. This in turn ensures the survival and growth of the system.
- This adaptive system is at times referred to as cybernetic system which is the study of control and communication.
- In this cyclical system, public relations act as a supportive subsystem. It produces inputs and disposes off the outputs of the production subsystem. It also maintains the relationship between the organization as a whole and the external environment.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the procedures that were used in carrying out this research were described. The sections in this chapter included:

- Research design
- Target population
- Sample and sampling techniques
- Research instruments
- Data collection and analysis

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study examined the current position with regard to the role of PR as a management function at AIC Kijabe Hospital. It was therefore a descriptive research. Descriptive studies, according to Koul (1984) are concerned with gathering facts rather than manipulation of variables. They obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena and describe “what exists” with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Best and Kahn 1993; Kinoti 1998). Consequently, a descriptive research was found to be appropriate as a means of achieving the purpose and specific objectives of this study.

### **3.3 Study Area**

The study was carried out in AIC Kijabe Hospital. It is within Kijabe Mission Station, Lari Division, Kiambu district, 65 kilometers west of Nairobi. It opened its doors in 1915 as a medical clinic under the African Inland Mission (AIM). It was then known as Theodora Hospital. In 1957 it was turned into a referral medical centre. In 1961 it was raised to a 65 bed hospital with a small surgical unit. Today, it has a 210 bed capacity and a staff establishment of over 400 besides being a teaching hospital.

### **3.4 Target Population**

The population of the study constituted the hospital management, employees and hospital clients.

### **3.5 Sampling procedure**

AIC Kijabe hospital has a staff establishment of 400. According to Best and Khan (1993) 10% of such a population is a fairly good representative sample. From the staff roll, the researcher systematically sampled the staff to get 40 respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of clients. 30 subjects accepted to be part of the study.

To substantiate the views of employees and clients, the researcher approached key informant subjects who were purposively selected on the basis of their positions in the hospital. They included the hospital's Executive Director, Director of Finance, Director of Resources, Medical Director, Director of Medical Education and The Chaplaincy Director. The researcher had prepared an interview schedule for this category of



respondents. The request to interview them was not accepted. A questionnaire was then prepared and given for them to fill.

The final sample therefore included: 40 employees, 30 clients and 6 members of the management team, a total of 76 respondents.

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The research instruments for data collection were questionnaires. Three sets of questionnaires were used. Clients' questionnaire had 6 items that solicited their perception on the hospital's services, care and treatment, image, and a comparison with other hospitals. The employee questionnaire had 7 items. It sought for information on induction training and its effectiveness and management-employee communication. The management questionnaire had 7 sections. It sought to solicit management views on role of PR in their organization, how they communicate with various publics, PR planning, activities, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. Questionnaires were found to be appropriate because they facilitated in giving out standard instructions for all respondents (Best and Kahn, 1993)

The questionnaires included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions facilitated straight forward scoring and data analysis while open-ended questions gave respondents freedom to reveal their opinion and provide greater depth information.

The research also involved the analysis of documentary evidence which helped to supplement information obtained through questionnaires. AIC Kijabe hospital's

documents used included Annual Reports, Notices and IEC materials posted within the hospital, and the hospital's website.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments**

Borg and Gall (1989) states that validity is the degree to which the sample of test items represents the content that the test is designed to measure. Validity of the research instruments was established by seeking the opinions of experts in the field of study as well as a thorough pilot-testing on a small group of respondents who were not included in the final study. Random sampling was used to get the small group for pilot testing the research instruments. The rationale of this was to assess the clarity of the instruments items and to modify or totally discard any item(s) that did not measure the variables intended in the study. One member of the management team, four employees and three clients were therefore randomly selected for the pre-test. The opinion of my supervisor and the result of the pilot study facilitated necessary revision and modification of the instruments thereby enhancing their validity.

Reliability of a research instrument enhances its ability to measure consistently what is intended. The reliability of the instruments was enhanced through the results of the pilot test. The result helped the researcher to correct inconsistencies arising from the instruments which ensured that they measured what was intended.

### **3.8 Administration of the Instruments for Data Collection**

The director, school of journalism provided an introduction letter indicating that the researcher was a student at the University Of Nairobi as policy required. The researcher then visited AIC Kijabe Hospital and sought audience with the hospital's Executive Director to state his purpose. Permission was granted by the Hospital's Ethics Committee allowing the researcher to proceed with the research. The researcher then met the respondents on agreed dates and collected data using the appropriate instruments.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Data analysis included examination and organization of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from both primary (questionnaire) and secondary sources (documentary analysis). The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) in tabular form. Qualitative data was presented in a discussion form.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of PR in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital. To achieve this purpose, two research questions were generated at the conceptual phase of the study. The questions that guided the investigations of the study were:

1. What are the roles and functions of public relations in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital?
2. What place and position has PR been given at AIC Kijabe Hospital?

To achieve its purpose and specific objectives, the study employed questionnaires as the main data collection instrument.

This chapter presented and analyzed the data collected in the following order:

- Management's views on the role of PR in an organization.
- Communication with publics.
- Place and position of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital.
- PR planning, coordinating, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.
- PR challenges facing AIC Kijabe Hospital.
- Employees views on management-employee communication.
- Clients views on AIC Kijabe hospital's image.

## 4.2 Management's Views on the Role of PR in an Organization

The researcher solicited the views of the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital on what they thought was the role and importance of PR to an organization. The views thus gathered enabled the researcher to find out whether the management recognized the important role PR plays in the success of an organization. Their views were presented below.

**Table 1: Management's Rating of the Importance of PR to their Organization (N=6)**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very important	5	83
Important	1	17
Not very important	0	0
Not important at all	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	6	100

Five out of the six respondents representing eighty three percent (83%) of the respondents indicated that they thought PR was very important to their organization.

Only one respondent indicated that PR was important to an organization.

### Role of PR in an Organization

Information was solicited from the management respondents on the role of PR in an organization. The question was open-ended and the following were the responses:

- PR helps to protect an organization's image and the public understands the organization, the services and products it offers.

- PR makes the publics contribute towards the improvement of services and products offered by an organization.
- Without PR, there would be poor management-employee communication.
- PR helps in providing information to the publics in a systematic and organized manner.
- PR helps the organization market an organization's services and products to the publics. The publics also convey their compliments, complaints and suggestions.
- PR helps the organization's publics to know what is happening in the organization.

### **4.3 Communication with the Publics**

The researcher sought to know from the hospital's management how the organization communicates with its external and internal publics. The responses provided information on communication techniques utilized by the organization. The data provided was given below.

**Table 2: Communicating with Employees (N=6)**

Technique	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Newsletters	6	100
Meetings	6	100
Telephone	6	100
Notice Boards	3	50
Pamphlets	1	17
Internet	1	17

*\*the percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses.*

The data provided indicates that newsletters, meetings, and telephone are the most preferred methods of communicating to employees by the six respondents. The least utilised technique was internet with one response. Other techniques employed by management to communicate with employees included conferences and workshops with targeted groups of employees.

All the six respondents indicated that they conducted induction courses with new employees. These courses assisted the new employees to know the organization's goals, aspirations, and policies for its employees. The induction courses were conducted by concerned departmental heads.

**Table 3: Methods Employees Use to Communicate their Grievances (N=6)**

Method	Frequency	Percentage (100%)
Staff meetings	6	100
Suggestion boxes	2	33
Trade union officials	2	33
In-house journal	0	0

*\*percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses*

The data in table 2 above shows that the most preferred method that employees utilize to convey their grievances was during staff meetings. None indicated that employees utilised an in-house journal.

### **Communicating with External Publics**

The researcher sought to know the methods external publics utilized in communicating to the hospital management and vice versa. All the six respondents indicated that the telephone was the most preferred means external publics utilized in communicating with the hospital management. Other methods included: suggestion boxes (3 respondents), letters (3 respondents), and internet (1 respondent).



**Table 4: How Management Communicate with External Publics (N=6)**

Technique	Frequency	Percentage
Bulletin boards	6	100
Reports	6	100
Telephone	5	87
Church meetings	4	66.7
Conferences	3	50
Letters	3	50
Internet	2	33
Newspapers/magazines	2	33
Newsletters	2	33
Radio	1	17
Television	0	0

*\*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses*

All the six respondents indicated that they utilized reports and bulletin boards to communicate with external publics. The least used technique was television which had no response.

#### **4.4 Place and Position of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital**

The researcher solicited from the hospital management information about the place and position of PR in their organization. The responses were put under the following sub headings.

## **PR as a Management Function**

The respondents were asked whether they thought PR was a management function. All the six respondents indicated that PR was a management function. When probed further to explain their responses, the following were their answers:

- Good PR management is very important to the success of an organization.
- As a management function, it helps the organization resolve problems and complaints brought by members of the public.
- It is the role of management to offer leadership and guidance to the organization and its publics; hence PR is a management function.
- The management needs to take initiatives in guiding and directing the PR of an organization.
- Issues of concern to the publics can be well attended and effected by management as decision makers.
- The management carries the vision of an organization and would seek to inform the publics in a systematic and organized manner for the success of the organization.

## **Public Relations Personnel**

The researcher sought to know whether there was PR personnel at AIC Kijabe Hospital. Four of the respondents said there was while two said there were no PR personnel. When probed further to indicate the job title of the head of the PR department, the respondents indicated that the work was handled by the Executive Director, Secretaries, Receptionists,

and Human Resources Director. Four respondents indicated that the persons who handle PR issues sat at management meetings and had decision making powers. Three respondents stated that the head of PR department reported to the executive director.

## **4.5 PR Planning, Coordinating, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation**

The researcher solicited information from the management on whether the organization had a PR plan and policy. All the respondents indicated that there was no PR plan or policy. All the six respondents indicated that the organization did not set PR objectives.

The researcher sought from the management information about PR activities AIC Kijabe hospital is engaged in. The responses are captured below:

- Free and subsidized medical outreach programs
- Free and subsidized treatment for employees and their immediate family members
- Production and distribution of annual reports, calendars, brochures, religious tracts and IEC materials
- Collaboration with smaller health facilities in the region to increase referrals to Kijabe Hospital
- Launch of the hospital's Web site, strategic plan, vision, mission and motto
- Hospital bill waiver for poor patients
- Collaboration with the government, Nursing Council and a host of donors

The researcher then sought to know the persons who plan and coordinate the above activities. Respondents indicated that the planning and coordination was in the hands of individual departments responsible for a particular activity in collaboration with the Resources Department. There lacked a central office to plan and coordinate PR activities

leaving much of the work to be done by the office of the Chief Executive and the Human Resources Department.

On the issue of PR activities budgeting, three respondents indicated that there was a set budget for PR activities. Two respondents indicated that there was no budget and one indicated that he was not aware of the existence of a PR budget.

The respondents were probed further to give a comparison between the budgets allocated for PR activities and other budgetary allocations. Two respondents indicated that the budget was very small while one respondent indicated that it was slightly less than other budgetary allocations.

### **PR Monitoring and Evaluation**

From the data gathered, five of the respondents indicated that they were not aware whether PR activities were monitored. One respondent indicated that PR activities were monitored. The respondents were asked to state who was responsible in monitoring PR activities at AIC Kijabe Hospital. Their responses were recorded in table 5 below.

**Table 5: PR Monitoring (N=6)**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Management	4	100
Executive director	2	33
Board of directors	0	0
Consultancy firm	0	0
Total	6	100

*\*percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses*

The above data shows the persons who were thought by management to monitor PR activities. A majority of four respondents indicated that it was the management team that monitored PR activities. Two of the respondents indicated that monitoring was done by the Executive Director.

The researcher sought information from the management about PR activities evaluation. Three of the respondents indicated that they were not aware whether PR activities were evaluated. The other three respondents indicated that PR activities were evaluated. The three who indicated that PR activities were evaluated were in agreement that PR activities were evaluated at the middle of an activity and at the end of the activity.

The researcher sought to know from the management what they considered to be PR challenges facing their organization. Three respondents left the question unanswered.

Those who offered their opinion had this to say:

- Financial constraints in the organization forced the management to ignore the need for well thought out PR campaigns
- Lack of a specific office to handle PR activities
- Issues discussed at meetings that touch on PR were at times left unattended leading to apathy among staff and complaints from clients lacked follow up.

The six respondents were in agreement that for the hospital to be better understood by its various publics, and succeed in its programs, the organization needed to establish a PR department.

## 4.6 Employees Views on Management-Employee Communication

Information was sought from the sampled employees to state the number of years they had worked for AIC Kijabe Hospital. The data gathered indicated that sixty two point five percent (62.5%) of the respondents had worked for the hospital for a period of five years and below. Only seven point five percent (7.5%) had worked for the hospital for twenty (20) years or more.

The researcher solicited from the respondents on whether they had received induction training upon employment. All the respondents reported that they had received induction training upon employment.

The researcher then probed them further to indicate whether the induction training they received assisted them in their work at the hospital. Seventy three percent (73%) indicated that they strongly agreed that the induction courses they received assisted them in their work. Twenty seven percent (27%) agreed with the statement that the induction training they received upon employment assisted them in their work at the hospital.

The researcher solicited from the respondents information on whether they received frequent briefs on the organization's intended activities and changes plus the part each employee was to play in those changes and activities. Sixty eight percent (68%) of the respondents indicated that they did not receive constant briefs on the hospital's intended activities and changes and the part they were to play in them.

The respondents were asked to give their opinion on the effectiveness of management-employee communication. Their responses were captured in the table below:

**Table 6: Management-Employee Communication is Effective**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	4	10
Not sure	0	0
Disagree	22	55
Strongly disagree	14	35
Totals	40	100

*\*percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses*

Fifty five percent (55%) disagreed that management-employee Communication was effective. Thirty five (35%) strongly disagreed and only ten percent (10%) agreed with the statement.

The respondents were asked to offer their opinion and suggestions on ways to improve management-employee communication. Some of their responses were stated below:

- Management should not intimidate staff who have different ideas on staff welfare
- Management should be more open and closer to employees
- Management should inform employees on intended changes and accommodate the employees ideas
- Communication channels with the management should be open to all employees and not a select few
- Employees opinions should be respected by management even when management disagree with the said opinions

## 4.7 Clients Views on Kijabe Hospital's Image

The researcher solicited from clients of the hospital their views on Kijabe hospital's image. Their responses were captured under the following sub headings:

### How did you come to know about Kijabe Hospital?

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents indicated that they had heard about Kijabe hospital from friends and relatives. Thirty percent (30%) had been referred from other hospitals while ten percent (10%) were neighbours of the hospital. None had heard it from the mass media (radio, TV and newspapers).

The researcher sought information from the respondents on their opinion about various services offered at the hospital. Their responses were captured in table 7 below.

**Table 7: Service Delivery Ratings (N=30)**

Service	Below satisfaction		Satisfactory		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reception	12	40	16	53	2	7
Communication With medical staff	10	33	18	60	2	7
Communication with non medical staff	17	57	10	33	3	10
Timeliness	23	77	6	20	1	3
Treatment	8	26.7	20	66.7	2	6.7

As shown in table 7 above, fifty three percent (53%) of the respondents indicated that reception at the hospital was satisfactory while forty percent (40%) thought reception was below satisfaction. A small percentage (7%) viewed reception as excellent. A slightly



greater majority (60%) viewed communication with medical staff as satisfactory. A slight majority (57%) viewed communication with non medical staff to be below satisfaction. Seventy seven percent (77%) of the respondents thought that the pace of treatment at the hospital was below satisfaction. However, a majority (66.7%) viewed treatment at the hospital to be satisfactory.

The researcher sought to know from the respondents whether they had been clients in other hospitals. Eighty percent (80%) indicated that they had been clients in other hospitals. When probed further to rate the services offered at the hospital with those other hospitals they had been to, seventy percent (70%) rated it as average, twenty percent (20%) rated it as poor while ten percent (10%) rated it as excellent. Seventy nine percent (79%) of the respondents indicated that they would refer other clients to AIC Kijabe Hospital.

The researcher also sought information from the respondents on their suggestions and recommendations to Kijabe Hospital on how the organization can improve its image in the eyes of the public. Some of the suggestions included:

- The hospital should make the process of treatment faster to avoid delays in the queues
- Directions within the hospital should be clearly marked to avoid confusing the clients
- The staff should be more friendly to the clients
- The waiting areas should be furnished with cushioned seats which are more comfortable

- Patients drop off area should be as near as possible to the main entrance since patients get rained on
- The toilet facility should be improved
- The hospital should provide subsidized transport to clients to the main Nairobi-Nakuru Highway.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provided a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study based on the analysis of the research data presented in chapter four.

The study had set out to examine the role public relations play in the management of health organizations in Kenya with AIC Kijabe Hospital as a case study. To achieve this purpose, two research questions were generated which guided this study. These questions were:

1. What are the roles and functions of public relations in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital?
2. What place and position has PR been given at AIC Kijabe Hospital?

Data was collected using questionnaires. It is from these data that this discussion and summary was derived.

### **5.2 Management's Views on the Role of PR**

AIC Kijabe Hospital Managers in the study sample were aware about the important role PR play in an organization. 87% of the respondents indicated that PR was very important in an organization. Seital (1987) states that for a hospital to succeed in its objectives, it has to be properly "positioned" through well thought out PR efforts. With regards to the role PR plays in an organization, the management respondents enumerated key roles of PR to an organization as: To protect and improve the Hospital's image, make the

hospital's services known to the publics and for the hospital to understand its publics. The data gathered therefore shows that the hospital's management was not in the dark about the role public relations play in an organization.

### **5.3 Communication with Publics**

Public relations activities are aimed at carefully selected groups of people who are subdivisions of the greater general public (Jefkins 1998). At AIC Kijabe Hospital, management respondents indicated that the organization had put in place techniques to communicate with both internal and external publics. From the study, it was revealed that newsletters, meetings and telephone were the most preferred methods that management utilized in communicating to employees.

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100% of the management respondents indicated that the organization conducts induction training to new employees. The purpose of these induction courses was to introduce the new employees to the organization's goals, principles and vision. This view was corroborated by employees in the study sample who concurred that the induction courses they received assisted them in their work at the hospital.

The management respondents also indicated that they utilized reports, bulletin boards, church gatherings and conferences to communicate with external publics.

### **5.4 Place and Position of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital**

In order for PR to play its proper function in an organization, it is prudent for that organization to place PR at the core of all its activities. A company cannot decide whether or not it will *have* public relations since it is omnipresent and ubiquitous in all a company's activities (Black 1972). One of the objectives of this study was to identify the place and function of PR at AIC Kijabe Hospital. From the study, all the six management

respondents indicated that PR is a management function. This concurs with Robinson (1966) who states that a public relations practitioner is part of the management team of the organization he is associated. The management of Kijabe Hospital recognized the importance of PR to an organization especially when it is recognized and placed in the right position in the organization.

There seemed to be confusion about whether there were PR personnel at the hospital. Some management respondents thought that the Executive Director, the Human Resources Director, Receptionists and secretaries were the PR personnel at the hospital. Black (1972) indicates that even though the management team has a corporate PR responsibility i.e each director is capable of handling elements of PR applicable to his specialized field. However, it is more efficient to leave public relations to the professional expert, thus permitting the other directors to concentrate on their own spheres of work. This study concluded that there were no professional PR personnel at AIC Kijabe Hospital. This was augmented by the fact that the hospital's organizational structure lacked a PR department.

## **5.5 PR Planning, Coordination, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is the duty of the PR manager in an organization to plan, organize, staff, direct, coordinate, report and budget for the PR department. Public relations will analyze and interpret issues that might impact the operations and plans of the organization (Basavanthappa 2005, Baran 2004). The Data gathered from the Kijabe Hospital management in the sample study indicated that the hospital lacked a PR policy and plan. The organization did not set PR objectives. This was despite that the hospital was

engaged in numerous PR activities which included: Free and subsidized medical outreaches in the neighbouring communities, production and distribution of annual reports, calendars, brochures, and religious tracts, Collaboration with smaller health facilities in the region, Collaboration with the government, Nursing Council and a host of donors among other PR activities.

For lack of a PR department, the responsibility of planning and coordinating PR activities fell in the hands of the individual department responsible for a particular activity. This led to conflicts and blame- shifting in case an activity was not successful.

Even though 50% of the respondents indicated that there was a PR budget, the other 50% of the management respondents indicated that there was none or were not aware of a PR budget. Since issues like budgeting of an organization's activities are assumed to be issues of discussion in management meetings, it was the conclusion of this study that there was no set budget for PR activities.

PR activities in the organization were said to be monitored by the Chief Executive and the management team. However, the lack of a particular office to monitor these activities may point to the fact that some activities lacked monitoring to ensure their effectiveness. 50% of the management in the study sample indicated that they were not aware of PR activities evaluation. Evaluation of any program is expected to be done before the onset of the activity, at the middle and after it has been concluded. Evaluation will ensure that mistakes, errors and omissions made in an activity are not repeated in following activities (Mulwa 2006).

## **5.6 Employees Views on Management-Employee Communication**

Of the employees who formed the study sample, 62.5% had worked for the Kijabe Hospital for a period of less than five years. This concurred with what was stated at the conceptual phase of this study that there was a notable high employee turnover at AIC Kijabe Hospital.

Even though 100% of employee respondents indicated that they had received induction training upon employment, they were not regularly briefed on the hospital's intended activities and changes. They were also not informed of the part they were to play in those activities and changes. To promote a positive external PR, an organization must have a sound internal PR. Employees form the most important constituent of any organization and their goodwill is of paramount importance for the organization to succeed. Center and Jackson (2002) indicate that employees want to know the direction the organization is headed, why it is heading that way and the role they have to play towards that particular direction.

This study concluded that some of the failures of PR activities at AIC Kijabe Hospital could be attributed to the management's failure to involve employees in the process of decision making and implementation of the hospital's programs.

Majority of the employees sampled indicated that management-employee communication strategies at Kijabe Hospital were largely ineffective. This was attributed to a lack of a properly formulated employee communication strategy at the hospital.

## **5.7 Clients' Views on Kijabe Hospital's Image**

From the sampled clients who formed part of the study, AIC Kijabe Hospital did not utilize the mass media (television, radio and newspapers) to make its presence known to the external publics. 60% of the sampled clients had heard about Kijabe Hospital from friends and relatives. 10% were hospital neighbours and 30% were referrals from other hospitals.

The clients were also not satisfied with the pace of treatment at the hospital. Staff that came into contact with the clients also lacked training in customer care. Only 7% of the sampled clients thought that reception at the hospital was excellent. However, the hospital remained a favourite of the majority of the sampled clients since from the data gathered, 79% indicated that they would refer other people to Kijabe Hospital. This meant that if PR was well organized and approached in a professional manner, the hospital would have improved its reputation and image and therefore it would have attracted a larger clientele.

## **5.8 Conclusions**

The main objective of this study was to examine the role PR plays in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital. From the findings, it was established that:

- The role of PR at the hospital was not well defined.
- Even though the hospital was engaged in numerous PR activities, there lacked a PR department to adequately handle these activities.
- Without professional PR personnel at the hospital, the task of handling PR was left in the hands of individual managers responsible for an activity.
- These managers lacked capacity in PR management.



- PR was therefore disorganized, done in an ad hoc basis and haphazardly approached.
- The hospital lacked a PR plan and policy. Thus planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of PR activities were poorly done.
- With no established tools for monitoring and evaluation, the success of a PR activity was gauged by the number of complaints arising out of the activity.
- There lacked specific goals for PR activities. The success of the activities could therefore not be measured for lack of benchmarks to refer to.
- Even though the hospital was in constant touch with various publics, it lacked a communication strategy to reach out to these publics. This meant that the publics found it hard to understand the organization.
- PR played an important role in the management of AIC Kijabe Hospital but it was not well defined and structured as a strategic management tool.

## **5.9 Recommendations**

In order for AIC Kijabe Hospital to remain relevant to its various publics, the following recommendations were made:

- There is an urgent need for AIC Kijabe Hospital to establish a PR and Communication department. The department should be staffed with professional PR personnel to handle PR issues at the hospital.
- The department thus established will be headed by a Public Relations and Communications Director who will sit in management meetings and report directly to the Executive Director. The person will be the link between the

organization and its various publics and will come up with a PR policy document to guide all PR activities at the organization.

- The department will carry out regular research among the hospital's publics to determine the needs of these publics. It will also set up proper communication techniques for the success of the hospital's PR and communications campaigns.
- The department will be responsible for protecting and improving the hospital's image, identify PR challenges and look for opportunities that will create a niche for the hospital for the success of the organization.
- The department will plan, coordinate, direct, budget, monitor and evaluate all PR activities. These activities will have set objectives that tally with the hospital's vision and objectives.
- The department will be allocated a budget to implement its activities and the PR and Communications Director will be held accountable to this budget.

### **5.9.1 Recommendations for Further Research**

This study should be replicated in government and private hospitals to examine the role PR plays in the management of those hospitals (AIC Kijabe hospital is a missionary hospital).

Research should also be carried out to include a wider population using different instruments. For example, in-patients should be included in further research since they are assumed to spend more time in hospital.

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## **Appendix A**

### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

University of Nairobi,  
School of Journalism,  
P.O. Box 30197,  
Nairobi.  
April 26, 2007.

Dear sir/madam,

#### **RE: RESEARCH INFORMATION**

I am a student at University of Nairobi pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies. I am conducting a research on Public Relations Management Function at AIC Kijabe Hospital. I will be extremely grateful if you respond to the attached questionnaire the soonest possible.

I would like to assure you that the information gathered will be used for the purpose of this research and will be treated with strict confidence.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

**GAITHO N. PETER**

## Appendix B

### MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly answer the following questions. The researcher would like to assure you that the information gathered will be kept confidential and used strictly for the purpose of this research only. **Do not write your name anywhere in this paper.** However, the usefulness of the information to the researcher will solely depend on your honesty. Thank you in advance. Please put a tick (✓) where applicable.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Job title \_\_\_\_\_

2. How would you rate the importance of Public relations in your organization?

- a) Very important ( )
- b) Important ( )
- c) Not very important ( )
- d) Not important at all

3. What would you say is the role of public relations in your organization?

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## EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

1. Which techniques do you use in communicating to your employees?

- i. newsletters ( )
  - ii. meetings ( )
  - iii. notice boards ( )
  - iv. pamphlets ( )
  - v. telephone ( )
  - vi. internet ( )
  - vii. others (specify)
- 

2. Do you carry out induction courses for new employees?

- a) yes ( )
- b) no ( )

3. How do your employees communicate their grievances?

- a) Through trade union officials ( )
  - b) Suggestion Boxes ( )
  - c) Staff meetings ( )
  - d) In-house journal ( )
  - e) Any other (specify)
-

## COMMUNICATING WITH EXTERNAL PUBLICS

1. How do external publics communicate with the management?

- a) Suggestion Boxes ( )
- b) Letters ( )
- c) Telephone ( )
- d) Internet ( )
- e) Any other (specify)

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2. Which techniques do you use to communicate to external publics?

- a) newsletters ( )
- b) letters ( )
- c) reports ( )
- d) bulletin boards ( )
- e) conferences ( )
- f) television ( )
- g) radio ( )
- h) newspapers ( )
- i) magazines ( )
- j) internet ( )
- k) telephone ( )
- l) others (specify)

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**PLACE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

1. Would you say public relations is a management function?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

2. Please explain your response in (4) above.

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3. Is there public relations personnel in your organization?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

4. If the answer to 7 above is Yes, what is the job title of the head of Public Relations Department?

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5. If the answer to 7 above is No, who handles public relations management function in your organization?

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6. Do the head of Public Relations department sit at management meetings?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

7. If the answer to 6 above is Yes, does the head of PR department have decision making powers?

c) Yes ( )

d) No ( )

8. To whom does the head of Public Relations Department report to?

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### **PR PLANNING AND COORDINATING**

1. Does your organization have a public relations plan/policy?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

c) Not aware ( )

2. Does your organization set public relations objectives?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

3. List some public relations activities your organization has been involved in the recent past to achieve the objectives stated in (5) above.

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_

v. \_\_\_\_\_

vi. \_\_\_\_\_

vii. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Who plans and coordinates these activities?

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5. Explain briefly about the coordination of public relations activities in your organization.

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### **PR BUDGETING**

1. Does your organization allocate a budget for public relations activities?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )
- c) Not aware ( )

2. If there is a budget, how does it compare with other allocations?

- a) Slightly more ( )
- b) Slightly less ( )
- c) Same ( )
- d) Very big ( )
- e) Very small ( )

## **PR MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

1. Are public relations activities monitored in your organization?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )
- c) Not aware ( )

2. If they are monitored, who does the monitoring?

- a) Board of directors ( )
  - b) Executive director ( )
  - c) Management ( )
  - d) Consultancy firm ( )
  - e) Other (specify)
- 

3. Are public relations activities evaluated in your organization?

- a) Yes ( )
- b) No ( )
- c) Not aware ( )

4. If they are evaluated, when is the evaluation done?

- a) At the beginning of a PR program ( )
- b) At the middle of a PR program ( )
- c) At the end of a PR program ( )
- d) All of the above ( )

What do you consider as public relations challenges facing your organization?

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What would you say is the future of public relations function in your organization? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix C

### CLIENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly answer the following questions. The researcher would like to assure you that the information gathered will be kept confidential and used strictly for the purpose of this research only. Do not write your name anywhere in this paper. However, the usefulness of the information to the researcher will solely depend on your honesty. Thank you in advance. Please put a tick (✓) where applicable.

1. How did you come to know about AIC Kijabe Hospital?

- a. Friends/ relatives ( )
- b. Referred from another hospital ( )
- c. Media ( )
- d. Other sources (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. When you were at the hospital, how would you rate the following services?

Service	Below satisfaction	Satisfactory	Excellent
Reception			
Communication with medical staff			
Communication with non-medical staff eg. cashiers			
Timeliness			

3. Have you been a patient in another hospital before?

a. Yes ( )

b. No ( )

4. If the answer to 11 above is Yes, how would you rate Kijabe Hospital with the other hospital?

a. Poor ( )

b. Average ( )

c. Excellent ( )

5. If you were to refer a person to a hospital, would you refer them to Kijabe Hospital?

a. Yes ( )

b. No ( )

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6. Please give your general recommendation on how the Kijabe Hospital can improve its image to patients

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## Appendix D

### EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly answer the following questions. The researcher would like to assure you that the information gathered will be kept confidential and used for the purpose of this research only. Do not write your name anywhere in this paper. However, the usefulness of the information to the researcher will solely depend on your honesty. Thank you in advance.

Please put a tick (✓) where applicable.

1. What is your current job title \_\_\_\_\_

2. State the years you have worked for Kijabe Hospital

- a. 0 - 5 years ( )
- b. 6 - 10 years ( )
- c. 11-15 years ( )
- d. 20 years and above ( )

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3. Were you given induction training upon your employment?

- a. Yes ( )
- b. No ( )

4. Do you agree that the induction training you received assist you in your work at the hospital?

- a. Strongly agree ( )
- b. Agree ( )
- c. Not sure ( )
- d. Disagree ( )
- e. Strongly disagree ( )



5. As an employee, do you receive frequent briefs on hospitals intended activities and changes, and the part you will play in them?

a. Yes ( )

b. No ( )

6. Do you agree that management-employee communication at the hospital is effective?

a. Strongly agree ( )

b. Agree ( )

c. Not sure ( )

d. Disagree ( )

e. Strongly Disagree ( )

7. Suggest methods to improve management-employee communication

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