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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION AMONG
SELECTED CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Angela Kachana Ntemwa, hereby declare that the work contained in the thesis entitled: *An exploration of the perceptions of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia* is my own original work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at any university or higher education institution for the award of an academic qualification.



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ABSTRACT

Public relations (PR) is seen as an intrinsic part of every organisation because it provides the opportunity to monitor, have dialogue, and respond to issues that affect key publics of the organisation. PR practitioners have used communication to uphold and maintain a favourable image and build beneficial relationships between an organisation and its public. Despite the value that is ascribed to public relations, negative perceptions about the practice prevail, at the same discussions on the professionalisation of public relations continue in different contexts. The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia, in order to understand how they construct public relations as a profession. Using a qualitative approach, the study adopted an exploratory research design. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with participants and the following observations were made: Stakeholder management and information management were perceived as some of the main roles and functions of PR. The placement of PR, in terms of the organisational structure, was seen as a matter of concern and an aspect that revealed how organisations perceive PR. The study also found that having a professional body to advance the profession, and support the interests of people working within the profession, is imperative towards the professionalisation of PR. The importance of having the relevant qualification was emphasised as another important aspect that can increase the credibility of the profession. The study concludes that the definition and role of public relations is well understood in some organisations while the placement of the public relations role away from the management role reveals a limited understanding of the role and function of PR. The study argues that understanding perceptions on public relations is a starting point towards building and maintaining the credibility of the profession. This is imperative as perceptions about the public relations profession affect how PR is practiced and its ultimate contribution to the success of the organisation.

Key Terms: *Public Relations, Perception, Profession, Professionalism, Corporate Organisations*

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the background and context of the study. It outlines the statement of the problem in order to provide the rationale behind conducting this study. In addition, the chapter explains the significance of the study, and scope of the study (delimitation). It also defines key technical terms that were employed in the context of this study. The chapter ends by providing an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

Public relations (PR), as a discipline, is practiced globally and is presently noticeable in many corporate organisations. Public relations, as it is known today, began in the 19th and mid-20th century in the United States of America and it was generally used in governmental matters only (Broom & Sha, 2012). In Africa, the concept of public relations was practiced before the era of colonisation and people were using PR to capture the public's attention and spur them into action (Van Heerden, 2004; Broom & Sha, 2012). According to Grunig (2011), many organisations widely apply PR as a means of enhancing reputation building and maintaining relationships to achieve specific organisational goals and objectives. Similarly, extensive literature has revealed that PR practitioners have used communication to uphold and maintain a favourable image and build beneficial relationships between an organisation and the public communities, groups, and people it serves (Johnson & L'Etang, 2006; White & Park, 2010; Bowen et al., 2012). Despite the evident significance of PR in society, the discussion on the professionalisation of public relations continues, particularly in contexts where it is viewed as a developing field.

Scholars such as Bowen et al. (2012, p. 3) outlined the importance of public relations to organisational success when they argued that PR can mean the difference between "life and death" or the difference between "profitability and failure". Furthermore, the rise of new media technologies has continually emphasised the role of PR for many organisations, as they now constantly deal with and manage communication on many different platforms. These sentiments are confirmed by Grunig (2011) who believes that public relations practitioners have a progressive role to play in the modern world, ranging from stakeholder lobbying, positive publicity to damage control about public opinion. Based on such

important undertakings, public relations as a discipline and function for many organisations has assumed a central role in the overall growth and development of institutions.

Newsom and Haynes (2010) view public relations as an intrinsic part of every organisation because it provides the opportunity to monitor, dialogue, and respond to issues that affect the key publics of the organisation. Newsom and Haynes (2010) further indicate that the relevance of public relations professionals to organisations is found in the roles they play within the organisation. In the same way, Grunig (2011) insisted that PR should be central to business strategy, translating and communicating the organisation's objectives, mission, and vision into language that will be understood, as preparation for the relationships that every organisation needs to form.

While Grunig (2011) and other scholars emphasise the role of public relations, the negative portrayal of the PR profession over decades has created a bias for those entering the field, as well as those working in the field worldwide (see Cutlip, 2013; Gupta, 2013; Bartlett & Grunig, 2011). For example, White and Park (2010) state that the public relations profession is still regarded as a typical occupation due to a lack of a clear distinct area of expertise for the profession. Also, according to Grunig (2011), the history and evolution of public relations as a field of expert practice gained a great deal of attention from the media, however, this attention perhaps has produced more suspicion, fear, and antagonism than respect. Bernays (2013) has expressed how most people seem to view PR as a mysterious hidden persuader working for the rich and powerful to deceive and take advantage of less the powerful.

To further illustrate challenges faced by PR professionals, Grunig (2011) contends that despite decades of maturity and proven worth, PR remains a nonessential organisational function in terms of budget, because many organisations regard it as a nice-to-have function, rather than a necessity. In addition, Muzio (2013) argues that the absence of a universal standard of public relations expert bodies throughout the world is another challenge as different public relations associations practice different forms of accreditation and codes of ethics.

Perceptions of public relations may be associated with the development of the practice as a profession. Research shows that a detailed understanding of the historical backdrop of the profession is fundamental to the professionalisation of the public relations practice (Broom & Sha, 2012). In the same vein, Newsom and Haynes (2010) stressed that credibility is an important aspect of the

professionalisation of PR. Moreover, Pratt (2010) underlines that credibility is the basis upon which PR professionals can influence an audience's perceptions or attitudes.

In another study, Sha (2011) adds some aspects that contribute to professionalisation and credibility, namely: Standardised education based on a theoretical body of knowledge, subscribing to codes of ethics, belonging to a professional body or association, being recognised, and acknowledged by the public through accountability, certification, or accreditation. On the other hand, Pratt (2010) cautioned that PR must not rely on licensing to build trustworthiness because licensing appears to carry an undeserved impression of honesty. He further echoed that PR professionals' reputation for integrity and competence should be their real licence to practice.

Based on the diverse academic discourses on public relations above, it is imperative to explore how the profession and its application as an organisational function are perceived in the African context. The limited literature available (Kiambi & Nadler, 2012; Ming-Yi & Baah-Boakye, 2009) shows that public relations in Africa is based on relationship building and that good interpersonal relationships are regarded as key to an organisational public relationship (henceforth referred to as OPR). There is a paucity of research that has examined the organisational perspective of public relations as a profession, especially in the Namibian context. It is on this basis that this study specifically explored the perceptions of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia.

1.2 The Namibian Context

Namibia obtained independence from South Africa in 1990 and the total population in Namibia as of 2020 is estimated to be at 2.5 million people, according to the latest census figures and projections from Trading Economics (Bank of Namibia, 2020). According to the Namibia Statistics Agency census, 2020, the population of Namibia represents 0.03 percent of the world's total population. Currently Namibia is in its third government with Honourable President Hage Geingob being the third president who constantly reminds his cabinet on accountability and transparency as core values of his administration. Transparency, especially in organisations, is one function that is supported by open communications, which can be facilitated by public relations professionals in any organisation. Thirty years after independence, some public organisations still consider executive directors as spokespersons of the organisation, a function which should be carried out by a public relations professional within the organisation. This is because public relations professionals, in public organisations, are not part of management. However, it is a different set-up in the private sector as public relations professionals

also sit at management level.

Mutambo (2014) states that, even though the public relations profession has been practiced for some time now in Namibia, the strategic value of PR is still underrated. Given the absence of a national body of public relations in Namibia, it is safe to say that public relations is still relatively an infant discipline in the country with limited qualified and branded PR professionals (Mutambo, 2014). There are still only a few Accredited Public Relations Practitioners (APRs) in Namibia. This issue becomes more evident when in search for public relations professionals in the public sector; senior journalists and ex-reporters are mistaken for public relations professionals just because they are likely to be outspoken enough, popular, or that they are similarly in the communication industry (Mutambo, 2014). A study on the public relations structural functions in Namibia done by David (2018), revealed that in some corporate organisations (*Offices, Ministries, Agencies - OMAs*), senior journalists and former reporters are confused for public relations professionals since they are likely to be expressive enough, popular, or that they are likewise in the communication field. Moreover, Mutambo (2014) is of the view that the public relations profession is regarded as 'just' information officers or media officers, and that the PR position is fused in a specific organisation's structures where it is regularly used as an emergency management tool, as opposed to an important management role. Although some senior Ministries in the public sector have tried to realign structures to accommodate public relations practitioners, there are only a couple of them as the majority are still being called senior journalists or information officers (Mutambo, 2014).

David (2018) highlights the importance of having a public relations professional on management level. "Public organisations should empower public relations professionals more often by involving them in management decisions so that they are aware of the strategic decisions being made." He further states that public service should re-look at reasons that prevent a public relations professional from expressing or communicating freely (David, 2018). The public relations function is essential to any organisation as it assists in enhancing service delivery to the public (David, 2018). Mutambo, (2014) concurs, saying that public relations professionals must assume a significant role in the Namibian public service. He further argues that despite the establishment of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) to harmonise the communication function in Namibia under one umbrella, communication remains thoroughly uncoordinated and fragmented across government institutions. Moreover, discussions on the professionalisation of public relations articulations indicate that it is partially applied in the Namibian professional work set-up as some organisations still work without PR professionals, let alone recognising them as part of the management team.

Mutambo (2014) maintains that communication is too important to be left to the uncertainty of what might be perceived by stakeholders, and too important for practitioners to be called in at the last moments of a crisis like image paramedics. Overall, these demeaning perceptions about public relations, influence the credibility of the profession and decreases its value to society (White, 2010). David (2018) further highlights that public relations function in the public sector is still under-utilised in the Namibian context and that there is still more to be done in terms of the profession. The study further revealed that there is a lack of emphasis placed on the importance of the public relations profession in Namibia. Kashuupulwa (2018) also adds that most organisations do not consider having public relations professionals in their management structures and this strips PR of the opportunity to add value to the organisation. Thus White (2010) argues that perceptions about PR and its influence on an organisation, determine the validity of the profession and may increase or reduce its relevance to society.

Various perceptions do exist on public relations as a profession. Given, that public relations in the Namibian context is developing (Mutambo, 2014), it becomes imperative to investigate existing perceptions about the public relations profession and how they are affecting the practice. Thus, this research explored how public relations as a profession is perceived by selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia.

1.3 Problem Statement

Public relations is of great importance and more efforts should be directed towards professional redress, as well as its recognition for organisational effectiveness. PR can enhance the overall business strategy by disseminating the objectives, mission, and vision of an organisation in a coordinated manner (Grunig, 2011). While the value of PR is acknowledged, literature has also shown that there are different perceptions that exist concerning public relations as a profession. David (2018), Mutambo (2014), Kashupulwa (2018), Grunig (2011) and White (2010) have argued that PR as a profession is generally undervalued and perceived as less important in the organisational context, including strategic decision-making, despite numerous research confirming the integral function of PR in organisations. For Asunta (2016), the negative portrayal of PR for many years has contributed to the low recognition of the profession. This negative portrayal has been attributed to, among other factors, lack of credibility among PR practitioners globally (Geremew, 2017), and that the PR industry has been crowded by many who assume anyone can do PR even when they have little knowledge of what PR is all about (see Meng et al., 2012, Muzio et al., 2013; Mutambo, 2014).

The Namibian public relations industry is not an exception to these debates. For instance, before the recent appointment of public relations practitioners in some Namibian organisations (Offices, Ministries, Agencies), the Chief Executive Officers and Executives Directors solely acted as the official spokesperson of their organisations. This trend is still prevalent in the public sector (Mutambo, 2014; Kashuupulwa, 2018). David (2018) states that there is still a lack of emphasis placed on the importance of public relations in Namibia, and this has hindered the progress of the profession. He further opines that the role of the public relations officers in the public sector is not clearly defined, and it often leads to miscommunication of messages to the public, which can have adverse consequences (David, 2018). Additionally, the perceived low recognition of the PR profession in the workplace originated from a poor understanding of the professions' roles and mandates. David (2018) is of the view that public relations professionals often find themselves in the position of having to persuade management on how important the profession is to their respective organisations. The struggle of perception of the PR profession is further exposed by the conflicts that exist between the PR practitioners and journalists as they continue to fight for attention, to prove who is worth more than the other (Mutambo, 2014).

In light of the discussion above, this study sought to explore the perceptions of corporate organisations in Namibia on public relations as a profession. This is imperative as perceptions about the public relations profession affect how PR is practiced, and its ultimate contribution to the success of the organisation. Specifically, CEOs and PROs of participating organisations were targeted in order to understand their perception of public relations as a profession in Namibia.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to explore the perceptions of the public relations as a profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek Namibia. The following sub-objectives were addressed:

- To examine the core functions of public relations within selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia.
- To examine how selected corporate organisations, construct public relations as a profession in Namibia.
- To establish the required standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations practice in Namibia.

1.4.1 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, this research answered the following research questions:

1. What are the core functions or role of the public relations within selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia?
2. How do selected corporate organisations construct public relations as a profession in Namibia?
3. What are the required standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations practice in Namibia?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The essence of research is to inform action. The findings of this study contribute towards the identification and implementation of standards of professionalism within the public relations profession in Namibia. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on PR as a profession. Additionally, the study provides a clearer understanding of the role and function of public relations in corporate organisations and how that directly affects its practice. The findings of this investigation may be used as a starting point for further studies on PR as a profession in Namibia given the limited research that has been conducted on this aspect thus far.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

The study explores the perception of public relations as a profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek Namibia with a specific focus on the functions of public relations, how organisations construct public relations as a profession, and the required standards needed for the professionalisation of public relations practice in Namibia. Participants for the study were practitioners and executives of these selected corporate organisations.

1.7 Definitions of the Key Terms

This section defines the key terms used in the study. The terms include public relations, perception, profession, and corporate organisations as used in the context of this study.

Perception: according to George and Jones (2012), perception is the human intrapersonal

communication process based on insight, intuition, and knowledge that informs the construction of an opinion.

Public Relations: is defined by Public Relations Institute for Southern Africa (PRISA) as the management through communications of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders (PRISA, 2012).

Profession: The Oxford English Dictionary's (2014) definition of profession involves occupation (whether career or vocation), knowledge, application, training, and formal qualification, with the last two regarded as normal but non-essential.

Corporate organisation: According to King IV (2016), a corporate organisation is a structured system with a common goal and an identifiable boundary delineating its function and purpose and it offers organisations many protections.

1.8 Thesis Structure

This study is divided into five chapters as summarised below:

Chapter one discusses the background and context of the study. The chapter also covers the statement of the problem, objectives and research questions guiding the study, significance as well as the delimitation of the study. Lastly, the chapter provides brief definitions on the key terms in the context of this study and the thesis outline.

Chapter two reviews literature which includes a wide range of definitions in the context of the development of the PR profession. It provides various academic arguments, perceptions, and views of the PR profession. The chapter further reviews literature on the historical development of PR from a global, regional, and Namibian context. In addition, the chapter discusses the concept of 'profession' from various viewpoints and also discusses the excellence theory.

Chapter three describes the methodological approaches used in this study. It outlines the research design and methods, including the data collection techniques, sampling procedure, and research population. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive discussion on ethical issues that were considered in the gathering, analyses and interpretation of the data collected.

Chapter four looks at data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the findings. The data analysis

process is deliberately framed in line with the objectives of the study. It therefore covers key themes on the core functions of PR, its perceptions, how PR as a function is placed within the selected organisations and the required standards for the professionalisation of the PR practice in Namibia, i.e., what needs to be done in Namibia to improve and ensure PR is recognised as an integral function within the organisational set-up.

Lastly, chapter five draws' conclusions and recommendations based on the findings as well as support from peer-reviewed academic sources. The discussions are aligned to respond to the study objectives which provides recommendations for public relations in the context of organisations and also towards efforts of professionalisation. It also provides recommendations regarding the perception of public relations profession among selected corporate organisations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of literature that is significant to the origin and practice of public relations (PR) and its development. Creswell (2014) states that the utmost necessity of having a literature review in a thesis cannot be overemphasised, and if left out, the study will not be well informed. This chapter therefore examines literature on various aspects related to public relations. Firstly, the chapter defines public relations and then provides a historical background on the development of PR. Furthermore, the chapter looks at the functions and roles of PR and provides a review of empirical studies that have looked at perceptions on public relations as a profession from a global, African, and Namibian context. The last section of this chapter provides a discussion on the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding this study.

2.1 Defining Public Relations (PR)

Currently there is a wide scope of public relations definitions extending across the various academic discourses with each contextualised differently in the various organisations. Greenberg (2014) contends that defining public relations and understanding its scope has been difficult when compared to more defined areas of study such as medicine, law, architecture, or accounting. Despite this challenge, several scholars have provided definitions that reflect the use and purpose of PR. Petrovici (2016, p. 32) defined public relations as a function that establishes durable connections, based on truth and mutual trust, both inside as well as outside the system, with the public opinion.

L'Etang (2013, p. 13) viewed public relations as “the occupation responsible for the management of organisational relationships and reputation”. Similarly, Hykadeada (2012, p. 12) considers public relations as the “management of relationships between an organisation and its publics”, because it basically focuses on managing and understanding relations in the public context. Park and Rhee (2010, p. 2) further stated that “PR focuses on relationships between an organisation and its public and they extended the definition to focus on six relationship maintenance strategies namely: access, positivity and openness, assurance, networking, and sharing tasks”.

Park and Rhee (2010) further state that in most cases the definitions of public relations are based on the concept in depth, and other definitions are contextualised on other business processes, such as communication arts and marketing. Greenberg (2014) echoed the latter, by stating that many scholars and institutions define PR based on their organisational arrangements (i.e., since the formal practice of public relations was determined, the PR profession has undergone many definitions, often evolving alongside its changing roles and technological understanding).

The modern definition of public relations is provided by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA, 2012), which emphasises that “public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics”. This definition further focuses on the basic concept of public relations as a communication process, one that is strategic in nature and emphasising mutually beneficial relationships (PRSA, 2012). Stated differently, this definition underscores the fact that the inclusion of public relations into organisational structures is a conscious effort to provide information and create goodwill as part of an organisation’s policy. Multiple definitions and views of public relations imply that there is a greater challenge in using a single definition that suits all environments. This is evident in the literature reviewed as scholars and practitioners do not seem to agree on a single definition of public relations (Butterick, 2011).

Considering the above, and as discussed by L’Etang, (2013), it is important to understand that the term PR is not a neutral technical term, but a concept that implies different meaning in different cultural settings. Regardless of the varied discussion on the actual definition of public relations, a brief look at the various definitions shows that public relations is about communication management aimed at building and maintaining good relationships and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. The definition offered by PRISA has been widely accepted among public relations practitioners and scholars alike, as it has merit and helps to explain the nature, role, and intention of public relations.

This study primarily focused on the working definitions of public relations and its purpose and functions within the different organisations. A PR related study by Mersham (1995), discussed that PR is designed to influence, gain understanding, propagate information, and ensure feedback from those affected by the organisation’s activities. Messages are tailored to reach an identified target population in accordance with a definite set of objectives. Grunig (2011) underscores that public relations is seen as an essential part of management which gives it a boost and credibility. Grunig (2011) further asserts that public relations also lay down the foundation of the profession squarely within management, as opposed to the competing approaches of journalism, or the promotion-based approach of marketing

and advertising that focuses primarily on consumers.

2.1.1 The History and Development Public Relations (PR)

Many scholars have diverse articulations on the origins of public relations. A study by Turnbull (2010) claimed that public relations began as a professional field in the 18th and 19th century with British Evangelicals and Victorian reformers. L'Etang (2012) argues that public relations were developed in the UK and United States of America (USA), simultaneously. According to Broom and Sha (2012) the use of public relations basic concepts can be seen throughout history, and it increased in the 20th century in the USA, where it was commonly used in governmental matters only. Similarly, a study by Guth and Marsh (2000) referred to the public relations concept as the 20th century phenomenon, and those public relations traces were present in human societies since the dawn of civilisation. This study also indicates that public relations is believed to date back so far in history that identified the ancient Babylonians and Sumerians (*now called Iraq*) as instigators due to some messages scrawled on mud-brick walls around 3 000 years ago (Gruth & Mash, 2000).

Even though public relations has no defined originator or exact date of origin, historians trace the use of its basic concepts back to Pericles' reign over Athens from 461 to 429 BC (Guth & Marsh, 2000). This is further linked to the fact that democracy was initially observed in Athens through public debates to create laws, which in turn enhanced the PR ideology (Broom & Sha, 2012). Moreover, these historical discourses on public opinion and its integration with ancient PR practises are evident from certain phrases used in the writings of the primitive period by the Greeks and Romans (Guth & Marsh, 2000). Interest in the history and evolution of the field did not cease altogether but concentrated on the history of PR as a field of practice and particularly on the rise of public relations at the beginning of the 20th century (L'Etang, 2008; Grunig, 2013; Curtin, 2012). Broom and Sha (2012) confirmed that the use of public relations basic concepts can be seen throughout history, and it increased in the 20th century in the USA government matters only.

Research by Penning (2008), on the history of public relations, asserts that "Lee's first press release was the birth of the public relations industry as it is known today". Penning's (2008) study further expressed that most scholars recognise the three pioneers of the new, modern style of public relations were: Ivy Lee, (regarded as the originator of the public relations counsel concept) and Edward Bernays, (often referred to as the father of modern public relations), as well as Arthur Page, (cited for ground-breaking

work as the first corporate public relations officer). Martin and Wright (2015) acknowledged that it is through the work of these and other trailblazers, that public relations began taking shape and extended onto major social issues and critical business challenges well beyond the hype and the generation of publicists.

2.2 History and Status of Public Relations (PR) in Africa

Generally, in order to develop a global body of knowledge it is imperative to analyse and assess PR in a wider context at different levels. Literature reviewed also focused on the concept of PR practices within the African continent. While the application of PR is not a new concept on the African continent, it is worth noting that in order to describe the practice of PR in Africa, it is necessary to use the global literature on the practice of PR as a benchmark.

Although PR is believed to have been introduced by British colonialists in the 19th and early 20th centuries during the beginning of the African civilisation, there are also trends about its application prior to colonialism in Africa (Rensburg, 2002). For instance, in ancient Egypt the pharaohs proclaimed their achievements through word-pictures on impressive monuments (see Rensburg, 2002). Similarly, the task of the spokesman at the chief's seat of power in traditional villages is very similar to that of a public relations practitioner today. Moreover, no African chief spoke directly to a visitor who called at the chief's seat of power and all interactions and all communication with the chief were channelled through a spokesman. This, incidentally, is still the case in some remote and traditional rural areas of Africa (Rensburg, 2002).

Similarly, Broom and Sha (2012) also believe that the concept of PR was practised before the era of colonialism in Africa, and people were using public relations to capture the public's attention and spur them into action. During the colonial era, PR was often used to support the formation of newspapers in British colonies in East and Southern Africa (Kiambi, & Natifu, 2014, p. 54) as it did in West Africa (Watson, 2017). Watson, (2017, p. 6). found evidence of a British colonial information methodology that allowed PR to be practised in a sophisticated way and this may have been applied in other colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean in the early to mid-20th century

Kiambi (2014) stated that even though PR is not a foreign concept in the African context, as it has for years been practiced differently and is rooted in the African culture, its recognition is nominal.

Historically, this has particularly been evident in the early 1980s where the PR profession in Africa had no focus and was relegated to the lowest realms of management in most organisations (see Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Kiambi (2014) further states that the initial practice of PR emerged from the press agency model and that the greatest historical influence in Africa in the last decade has been the emergence of the era of democratisation. In the same vein, Watson (2017) also indicated that the era of democratisation, and the global attempt to increase transparency and accountability, have been one of the greatest influences behind the PR scene in Africa's history.

Amid all the historical intricacies in relation to public relations application in Africa, one key literature piece to consider is the study by Van Heerden (2014), where he states that public relations practitioners from developed and developing countries fulfil different roles. For instance, practitioners from the industrialised West are generally socially responsible, but in the Third World, public relations practices are designed to be consistent with political ideologies, levels of development, and socio-political controls (Van Heerden, 2014). This also resonates with claims by Rensburg (2002, p. 12), who stated that the complex and diverse nature of the culture, development, economic and socio-political issues of the African environment have an impact on the effectiveness of the social activities on this continent. These macro environmental factors therefore also impact on the way in which PR practitioners' function. It is these factors that cause Western scholars to struggle to appreciate the complexities of Africa, as well as the strong collectivist cultural approach (as opposed to the traditional individualistic Western approach) of the African continent, in relation to the application of public relations (Van Heerden, 2014).

2.2.1 The Rise of Public Relations (PR) in Namibia

In the Namibian context, there are a few studies done with regards to public relations as a profession and how it is applied in terms of its functions. One of the notable studies done by David (2018) in *"examining public relations in Namibia public sector"*, shows that there is a lack of emphasis placed on the importance of public relations in the public sector. The lack of judgement prohibits public relations practitioners in the public sector from successfully carrying out their tasks and fulfilling the communication needs of government and the public. The study calls for public relations practitioners in the public sector to be more proactive in terms of carrying out their duties and equipping themselves with knowledge about their employer to assist the public when the need arises. "They should not shy away from certain responsibilities, but instead embrace every opportunity as a chance to learn and improve on their work" (David, 2018).

A comparative study of journalists and public relations practitioners done by Kashuupulwa (2018), indicates that journalists from both private and state-owned media houses are not distinguishable with public relations practitioners because of their common responsibility of informing the public. Kashuupulwa (2018) further indicates that public relations practitioners also seem to think that there is more of a symbiotic relationship between the two groups. Kashuupulwa (2018) suggests that government at all levels needs to establish a coordinating forum between the government and the media houses to straighten out any misunderstandings between the two professions and start a new culture of mutual cooperation between journalists and public relations practitioners.

Mutambo (2014) on the other hand believes that the public relations profession is a cornerstone of public policies and services which has been practiced in many different organisational contexts, including not-for-profit organisations. Mutambo (2014) further states that it is disappointing in this era to still find some organisations working without public relations professionals, or neither regard them as part of the management team. Mutambo (2014) believes that relationships are at the centre of public relations, and it is seen as an important ingredient for the effective functioning of an organisation. Hence, the high-level of organisations and the public relations professionals should know very well their publics if they want to achieve organisational missions (Mutambo,2014).

Public relations is one of the most direct by-products of democracy. Despite the history and significance of how public relations was practiced in the society, the discussion on the professionalisation of public relations continues, particularly in the Namibian context, where it is still viewed as a developing field (Mutambo, 2014).

2.3 Role and Functions of Public Relations

According to Grunig (2013), public relations has a unique organisational role which includes a strategic management function, as well as ensuring that organisational relationships with various stakeholders are managed positively (i.e., positive perception of the brand). With the advent of social media, the public relations function has become more useful to organisations as it constantly allows for synchronisation of conversations and the sharing of user-generated material using the Web 2.0 environment (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2011). In other words, the role of organisational public relations is expanding with the changing times: “Public relations doesn’t just focus on your business product; it also assists in shaping strategic messaging” (Benyman,2010).

Public relations further improve channels of communication and institutes new ways of setting up a two-way flow of information and understanding (see Benyaman, 2010). In many organisations, public relations departments supervise and evaluate public attitudes, whilst maintaining mutual relations and understanding between an organisation and its public (Kent, 2013). Given that people may have questions related to the brand operations, workflows, or the types of ingredients it uses in the products, the public relations function can communicate accordingly to maintain the reputation of the business (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2012). In the same vein, Brown and White (2010) argue that business value proposition is one function of PR that is very important; for instance, a company's core values entail a mission statement that can be used in a couple of press releases to create a storyline for the people. Such strategies are important to uphold the goodness, prosperity, and common welfare aspects of any business in question Brown & White, 2010).

Reddi (2019) states that community relations management is also one of the very important functions of public relations - for any prospering business. It is important to create and maintain a positive relationship with the community. Reddi (2019) further mentions that "there are times when companies want to be seen partaking in public welfare programmes and such activities which help to promote a positive image". According to literature, the role of public relations has evolved as scholars have extended the manager/technician typology. Broom and Sha (2012) introduced the concept of roles in the PR and conceptualised four roles: The expert prescriber, the technical services provider, the communication process facilitator, and the problem solving/task facilitator. Dozier (2015) revealed that manager and technician are two major roles that dominated public relations role research. Steyn (2011) believes that the roles of public relations is to manage the subjects and expectations of stakeholders and society and to determine communication policies to prevent conflict.

The role of public relations in the Namibian context is still underrated. Based on the literature by Namibian scholars, the main tasks and responsibilities are often confined to information dissemination (media releases, speechwriting, photography, in-house journals, reports, and trade shows), rather than deliberate information and perception management (David, 2018). In the public sector, for example, PR function is still not regarded as a management function (Mutambo, 2014). Public relations function is helping people and organisations gain public acceptance by explaining the aims, objectives, and methods of their organisation, and by building and maintaining a favourable image (Mutambo, 2014). According to Kashupuulwa (2018), public relations is a strategic communication process companies, individuals, and organisations use to build mutually beneficial relationships with the public.

Van Heedern (2014) believes public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; and helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change.

2.4 Social Media Management as a Function of Public Relations

Social media management in public relations looks at the process of managing the organisations online presence on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc., by creating, publishing, and analysing content that should be posted (Lamsal, 2012). Managing social media also allows public relations professionals to engage and interact with social media users (Lamsal, 2012). Social media communication technology has changed the way we communicate worldwide, and Namibia is not an exception. It can be argued that social media has increased both connectivity and participation in all spheres of social life.

2.5 Perception of Public Relations and its Professionalisation

The media has portrayed public relations in a negative way for several decades, and this affects how the public perceives the credibility of the profession and the value of the profession to society (White, 2010). Public relations is mostly being conceptualised as damage control, publicity, hiding truth, progressing an organisation's agenda, and non-substantive activities (White, 2010).

The study by Swerling (2010) identified cognitive patterns, norms and perceptions of CEOs and Executives when it comes to public relations function. Top executives perceive public relations as a legitimate and necessary organisational function, which is taken for granted in a modern company and in the normative institutions. The executive level expects public relations professionals to act as facilitators with advisory influence (see Busy, 2013, p. 82). Moreover, public relations professionals are not always the first choice when CEOs and board members reflect on the topics at hand (Zerfass & Sherzada, 2015). This means that advanced visions of strategic communication developed in academia and practice have not yet arrived in many boardrooms (Zerfass & Sherzada, 2015).

Adjei (2015) also states that public relations is still considered by many, particularly journalists, as just

another name for publicity. Adjei (2015) further opines that public relations is just there for information sharing and damage control, an attempt to hide or disguise bad image about the organisation. White and Park (2010) concur with the sentiment by Adjei (2015); journalists tend to believe that public relations practitioners are more inclined to mislead the public than is actually reported to be the case. This triggers debates on the legitimacy, transparency, and effectiveness of the public relations profession. Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) believe that public relations from the executive's perspective recognises a traditional mindset of top executives focus on the value of mass media than social media. Adjei (2015) further states that public relations professionals are known for making sure that the organisation is protected from scandals that could damage the reputation of the organisation.

According to Petrovici (2016), public relations as a profession is still undesirably portrayed for years, the low recognition of the profession and lack of credibility amongst practitioners is still a major issue globally. Bernays (2013) underscored the importance of public relations as a tool in adjustment, integration and interpretation between society and individuals or groups. He further maintains that public support and understanding is fundamental for the survival of the profession in the current competitive system (Bernays, 2013). L'Etang (2013) further affirms that public relations scopes issues concerning public affairs, stakeholder relations, management, corporate communications, risk corporate social responsibility (CSR) and communication.

In the same vein, Likely and Watson (2013) indicate that public relations professionals demand a stronger strategic involvement, but if their visions do not match those of their superiors, it is quite understandable that CEOs/Executives do not see a need for an increased strategic influence of public relations. However, Likely and Watson (2013) still believe that public relations are a major force in today's global society. Van Hook (2011) claims that public relations practitioners not only represent their organisation to the public but are required to present the public to their organisation as well. So, it is up to the public relations professionals to prove their value for organisations. Tench et al., (2017) state that public relations practitioners are expected to continuously reflect on their behaviour, the role they play for their stakeholders and society at large, and their environment, as they are helping organisations to adapt to the changing circumstances that they constantly face.

Although there is an ongoing debate on the phenomenon for many years (Likely & Watson, 2013), methods and practices of linking public relations to business strategies, setting measurable targets, and evaluating public relations activities continues to be the most important challenge for the institutionalisation of corporate communications in Europe (Zerfass, et al., 2013) and in other regions of

the world (Macnamara, 2013). Correspondingly, the application and history about PR as a profession have been conducted, which gives an understanding into the beliefs and values that have shaped the development of the profession as well as overall perception of public relations by the public's states. (Broom & Sha, 2012).

Sterne (2010) claims that CEOs have a low opinion of public relations profession. They are less inclined to see public relations as an integral part of doing business. They also see reputation management as best conducted by themselves rather than a consultancy except in crisis. A clear distinction was made between public relations (consultancy based) and corporate communications (in-house) (Macnamara, 2013). None of the companies used the term public relations in their in-house communications titles. Communications managers distanced themselves from public relations, claiming instead to offer integrity-based, transparent communication and marketers saw public relations as serving marketing (Macnamara, 2013). Executive Directors in the public sector saw public relations as serving strategic objectives but were sceptical about their competence in delivering strategic communication (Mutambo, 2014). They believe that public relations practitioners still need to be guided for them to maturely resonances the vision, mission, and objectives clearly (Mutambo, 2014). All these perceptions about public relations affect the profession.

However, a further study by Gleeson (2013) found that the public relations profession attracts professionals to the industry who like working with people. Other reasons included corporate image building, social opportunities, public speaking, and writing (Gleeson, 2013). Although these qualities are perceived as not so strong qualities to wipe away the perceived image, (Krirantono & McKenna, 2017; Tanyildizi & Ataykaya, 2019; Yaxley, 2013) believe that credibility should be the core for any profession which is lacking in the public relations profession.

According to Sterne (2010), several notions emerge that shape the embodiment of the awareness of public relations profession in Indonesia, based on the government officials. The most dominant notion is gender stereotyping, where public relations is considered as an area of work suitable for female professionals. It is not news that women dominate in terms of sheer numbers when it comes to public relations, even though they are underrepresented in leadership roles. Research has shown that public relations is considered or perceived to be a profession or a practice that can be competently done better by women (see Sterne, 2010).

Sterne (2010) further states that, while there has been no real research into why there are more women than men in public relations, the conventional notion holds that public relations appeals to women as a career choice because it requires a substantial investment in building relationships and expanding lines of communications - two areas that women have historically excelled at compared to their male counterparts. From a sociological perspective, women have flooded the workforce in greater numbers over the past 40 years, especially in public relations, human resources, and accounting (Sterne, 2010).

According to Grunig et al., (2013, p. 11) “any field suddenly shifting to a female majority, or even experiencing the hint of more women than men, faces the realities of dwindling salary, status, and influence within the organisation”. Public relations attract many women to the profession because of their special skills to listen and empathise with their clients, work well in teams, and be aggressive advocates for their clients (see Huffman et al., 2010). These skills are a natural fit for a lot of women. Fitch and Third (2010, p. 2) however stress the fact that the domination of women in public relations positions public relations as “feminine”. The labelling of the public relations sector as “feminine” creates a contradiction between men and women and develops several themes regarding the feminisation of the public relations sector, the impact of their professional activities, the gender inequalities in the field and the challenges for women as public relations practitioners (Fitch & Third, 2010).

The same view is accredited by Verhoeven and Aarts (2010), who echoed that, for the public to view public relations as a feminine sector, is a consequence of the rising trend of public relations in recent years that continue to rise on top of rankings. A research study conducted by (Fitch et al., 2016) explains that even though the number of women in public relations was increasing, the pay disparity between men and women, as well as the lack of advancement opportunities for women, prevented women from achieving the same career goals as men in the public relations profession.

The study *“How European PR men and women perceive the impact of their professional activities by Verhoeven and Aarts (2010, p. 7), outlines the fact that male public relations professionals perceive themselves as being taken more seriously by senior management in their organisation than female professionals. They believe they are respected more than females and colleagues would rather listen to the male professionals than they do with the female professional in the same position.*

A central issue for the type of gendered profession that public relations has become is the question of the so-called power differential: The difference in power between men and women in management

positions in organisations (see Verhoeven & Aarts, 2010, p. 7). Women are in a complex organisational situation where power is not only actual, but also perceived (see Moreno et al., 2010, p. 22). Sex-role stereotyping in a society makes people perceive women as less powerful or empowered than they are (Moreno, et al., 2010, p. 19) and this may even lead to a distortion of the self-perception of women in relation to their power in the organisation. In Russia, similar to many other countries, public relations is often seen as a profession that is better suited for women than men due to historical, socio-economic, and societal factors as well as due to pre-conceived notions about public relations (Tsetsura, 2014).

One study found that most men in the public relations field perceive the field to be feminised and that men working in the field work must adjust their behaviours to fit in with the women (Pompper & Jung, 2013, p. 23). Fitch (2016) explains that “certain kinds of public relations activities are marginalised by an exclusive occupational identifier that hinges on a narrow conceptualisation of professional public relations”. She goes on to explain that this divide in gender roles has created a division in public relations roles, like professional or strategic positions and technical positions which consists of publicity and promotion. A study done by (Dozier et al., 2013) confirms that a salary gap due to gender still exists in the public relations industry.

In the same study, Dozier et al., (2013, p. 45) also found “that gender had a significant direct impact on income” and that women in public relations were paid less than men doing the same jobs. On the other hand, research that has been conducted show that on a contrary, men can also do a better job in the public relations profession (Moreno, et al., 2010), even though it is a different world for them as they sometimes find themselves in a boardroom dominated by women. Despite the field becoming predominantly female, the leadership positions still tend to go to men (Moreno et al., 2010). Thus, gendered discourses could reinforce these perceptions and self-perceptions about women in public relations management positions.

2.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This section discusses the theory and conceptual framework informing the study. Specifically, the section discusses the excellence theory and then followed by a discussion on the concept ‘profession’.

2.6.1 Excellence Theory

The excellence theory of public relations was developed by Grunig (2006). The purpose of the excellence theory’s is to elaborate the value of public relations to organisations and society based on the

social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholders (Grunig, 2008). The theory maintains that for an organisation to be effective, it must behave in ways that solves the problems and satisfies the goals of stakeholders, as well as of management (Grunig 2008). Based on this theoretical premise about the value of public relations, the excellence theory derived principles of how the PR function should be organised to maximise this value. Grunig and Hunt (2006) believe that the critical characteristic of excellent public relations is to be involved in strategic management. Public relations executives play a strategic managerial role as well as administrative manager role and they are empowered by having access to a key organisational decision- maker. He also argues that sublimating PR to marketing will make public relations lose its unique role in strategic management (Grunig 2008). This ultimately results in organisations paying attention to only one party. In many instances, the result will be that interests of the organisation are considered at the expense of the public.

Excellence theory also touches on nature of communication in organisation. Grunig (2008) refers to what he calls a symmetrical system of internal communication. This system is believed to increase employees' satisfaction with their jobs and with the organisation. However, internal communication generally was not practiced unless organisations had a participative rather than authoritarian culture and a decentralised, less stratified (organic) structure rather than a centralised, stratified (mechanical) structure (Grunig, 2006).

Lastly, the excellence study looked at the effect of the growing number of women in public relations and evidence shows that women had difficulty entering managerial roles (Grunig & Hunt, 2006). The research showed that organisations with excellent public relations valued women as much as men for their strategic roles and developed programmes to empower women throughout the organisation, and this led to inclusion of diversity of race and ethnicity.

A study of excellence theory of public relations by Schmitz (2014) analysed the use of social media by public relations practitioners in an effort to revive democracy by using social media dialogically. Schmitz (2014) identified the pros and cons of this type of communication tool to discuss how current methods can be improved to strengthen the relationships between a client and their publics, as well as benefit democracy and society. Schmitz (2014) recognised that although people have anticipated more freedom and unfiltered sharing of information as technology has expanded, the reality of self-selected media has allowed people to select what they want and like to hear over what they need, creating a continued limited view. Kent (2013) concurs with the sentiment: "People spend more time with technology and

access to information than ever before, but probably engage democracy less than at any point in history, since technology has made filtering out the negative voices and opinions of others so easy” (Kent, 2013, p. 338). With this reality, there is a strong opportunity for public relations professionals to engage followers dialogically and close the gap between self-selecting media tendencies and broader dialogical engagement, but that is currently still not occurring.

The theory ties in well with the study, especially with the first objective of the study and with the researcher aiming to explore how the public relations profession is perceived by corporate organisations and the functions of PR in organisations.

2.6.2 Concept ‘Profession’

This section is devoted to defining the concept of profession used in this study in order to support the study’s objective. The conceptual framing is very important to the foundation of the study as it defines what profession is in detail. The review of the common definitions of a profession begins with the dictionary definition. The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) notes that “a profession encompasses occupation (whether career or vocation), knowledge, application, training, and formal qualification, with the last two regarded as normal but non-essential.”

The characterisation of profession is contextualised within the aims of the study in a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework generally refers to a network of linked concepts or ideas that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon and it offers many benefits to research (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). For instance, “it assists the researcher in identifying and constructing his/her worldview on the phenomenon to be investigated” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). “It is the simplest way through which a researcher presents his/her asserted remedies to the problem he/she has defined” (Akintoye, 2015). “It accentuates the reasons why a research topic is worth studying, the assumptions of a researcher, the scholars s/he agrees with and disagrees with and how s/he conceptually grounds his/her approach” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Akintoye (2015) posits that the conceptual framework is mostly used by researchers when existing theories are not applicable or enough in creating a firm structure for the study.

Halse and Malfroy (2010) state that sociologists have been struggling to agree on a single characterisation that could capture the notion of a profession. This is because there are less theories found when it comes to profession. In this thesis, the concept of “*profession*” is employed as a lens through which public relations is observed as a profession from the experienced public relations

practitioners, and chief executive officers' point of view. There are three crucial questions which should be addressed in order to understand the concept of profession, and these are: What is a profession? How is a profession constituted? Who is a professional and how does an occupation become a profession? Professionalism and professionalisation are also very important concepts when it comes to the study of profession (Evetts 2013). The study of professionalism addresses professionals' values, norms, discourses, and identities, while the study of professionalisation examines the societal role of professions (Van Heerden, 2004).

The concept of "*profession*" can also be approached from historical perspectives. The purpose of the study on professions can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015). Scholars such as Höhle and Teichler (2013) have examined the sociology of professions and theories of professionalisation.

2.6.3 The Sociology of the profession from globally universal to national contingent

The sociology of the professions indicates that profession was born with a distinctively Anglo-American focus, and they branded the professions as associations of gentlemen that emerge autonomously to institutionalise and regulate a specific area of practice (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977). Whilst some authors stressed the functional, public spirited and even civilising intentions behind these initiatives, and drew attention to the way professional guilds allowed knowledge bases, ethical and altruistic values and standards to be upheld in relation to public safeguard services such as law and medicine (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Parson 1954), others connected professional projects to the exercise of power and pursuit of self-interest by elite groups that seek to create a monopoly for their services and restrict numbers in a profession so as to maintain fee levels and social standing (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977).

To recognise the concept of profession, the sociology of a profession's perspective must be developed to understand its concept. Evetts (2013) states that the sociology of the profession is a domain within the sociology of work whose object is the study of professions as a special category of occupations. The first half of the 19th century witnessed an amazing occupational professions' moment/era of creation in a modern sense (Höhle & Teichler (2013). But early modern professions were very different in terms of governance and identity than what is commonly conceived of as professions or a professional today. Like many socially important phenomena, professions are mythologized both by their members seeking legitimation, and by outsiders (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015).

Halse and Malfroy (2010) also detailed that several different frameworks have been put forward over the years, attempting to provide an understanding of the concept of profession. The most famous approach when it comes to profession was probably the approach provided by Elliot in the 1970s, which argued that professions can be divided into three distinctive groups namely: the “status” or “traditional professions”; “new” professions are the so-called “occupational professions, and “educational professions”. Höhle and Teichler (2013) expanded on the division as follows: the first group (“status” or “traditional professions”) are linked directly to societal power (e.g., priests and officers and, more recently, lawyers and medical doctors).

This group of professions has evolved as a process of transforming outdated estates under the control of a central power, with help from a university education. The second group (“new” professions are the so-called “occupational professions”) have developed to meet societal needs, such as social workers and accountants. These are professions that have succeeded in their pursuit of professional status. The third group (educational” professions) are part of the occupational system and, at the same time an integral part of the educational system which lays the foundation for the occupational system, teachers, and professors.

However, consensus has not been reached on how a profession should be defined. This is because in the past half century, professional ethics have been viewed in two very different ways - as a special kind of ethics, with its own distinctive features, and as a branch of general philosophical ethics (see Adams, 2015). Under the first approach, Adams (2015) states that each profession crafted its own ethical code and belief, guided by the assumed social role of the profession and the ideals that inspired its members. The second approach, which has predominated since the 1970s, sees professional ethics as based on general ethical principles (Adams, 2015). The contest between these two approaches to professional ethics might seem to be long since over. Höhle and Teichler (2013) state that much of the extensive literature on the principles-based approach is focused on refinements and clarifications rather than presenting any fundamental challenge to it. Nonetheless, the basic debate is not quite over.

The overall understanding is that members of a profession can be expected to exhibit characteristics of honesty, reliability, beneficence, a sense of personal responsibility, integrity, and independence (Tapper & Millet, 2014). Adams (2015) describes profession as a kind of occupation with three characteristic features: specialised training in a field of codified knowledge usually acquired by formal education and apprenticeship, public recognition of a certain self-independence on the part of the community of practitioners to regulate their own standards of practice, and a commitment to provide service to the

public that goes beyond the economic welfare of the practitioner. The concept profession according to Marini et al., (2016) is used traditionally to indicate an occupation of the conduct of which it is characterised by emotional neutrality, command over a body of knowledge, formal standards of conduct, a service orientation, elevated social status, extended training and education, self and social control, and the establishment of formal associations.

In addition, Marini, et al., (2016) further claims that professions are recognised as important targets or sources of identity for their incumbents, and this identity may obstruct organisational attachment. Although this is not an exhaustive list of features, some authors emphasise that profession is achieved rather than ascribed (see Brante, 2010). Brante (2010) refers either explicitly or implicitly to these elements in referring to profession, or in distinguishing professions from other occupations. Thus, despite renewed attention to profession, the concept has not been explained in organisational communication terms, nor has it been an explicit focus of organisational communication research.

Halse and Malfroy (2010) describe profession as a full-time occupation; commitment to a calling; identified with their peers - often in a formalised organisation; possession of esoteric but useful knowledge and skills, based on specialised training or education of exceptional duration and perhaps of exceptional difficulty; service orientation; and independence. Halse and Malfroy suggested that these characteristics are “not of equal value and can be regarded as points along a scale of professionalism”. Brock and Saks (2016) explain that for professions to turn into a professional, it must first enter a covenant that opens out in three directions - intellectual, moral, and organisational - that help distinguish professionals from careerists.

There are limiting conceptions, in which only very limited choice of occupations like physicians and lawyers are regarded as professionals (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015). Such classifications or typologies usually point to “professionalisation as a progression that can be analysed using the so-called staircase model: first a school is established, then an association, examinations, licensing, an ethics code and finally the occupation arrives at its end point” (Carvalho & Santiago, 2015).

This approach can be used as a checklist of attributes that could be applied to distinguish the professional from the non-professional occupation. Pfadenhauer and Sander (2010, p. 373) argue that in general “there is a shift from a static conceptualisation of professions towards a dynamic concept of professionalisation and professionalism”. This is because the possible ‘characteristics’ of a profession are

becoming fewer, and there is no way to attribute them with precision. Sociologist Michaela Pfadenhauer (2010) focuses on her work not so much on the characteristics of professions, but rather on the aspect of dramatisation, revealing the seemingly objective elements of professions (like achievement and competences) to be a way of presentation.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter synthesises key literature pieces by starting with scholarly definitions and academic discourses in the context of this study. It further covered the origins and development of PR and its various applications considering the cultural diversity and societal intricacies globally. The chapter also extended to cover applications of PR in the African context using the global body of knowledge on PR as a benchmark. The discourses also zoned in on the Namibian perspective and the research conducted on the practises and role of PR in the different organisations. The review further extended the horizons by looking at how the advent of technology has affected the PR profession and what the current trends are in terms of relaying communication in the digital era. The chapter also explored the articles on perception, feminisation of the PR profession and concluded by looking at the theoretical and conceptual framework which specifically covered the “Excellence Theory”, as well as the concept of “*profession*” in the context of the objectives of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology employed by this study to understand the perception of public relations as a profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia. The chapter therefore begins by describing the research design, followed by the paradigm and the research approach. It also discusses the population and sampling techniques, as well as the type of data collection and analysis methods, and techniques and procedures employed in the study. Lastly, the chapter discusses research ethics applied in the study.

3.1 Research Design, Paradigm, and Approach

A research design is an important part of the research process that determines the extent to which the outcomes of the research are achieved. It is required for a researcher to identify a design or structure that should be used in conducting the research. Bhattacharjee (2012) defines a research design as the blueprint for gathering data that answers specific research questions. Similarly, Richards and Morse (2012) are of the view that a research design lays out the kind of data needed, methods to be used in collecting the data, and all the processes that will answer research questions. Harwell (2011) stresses the importance of the research design and posits that a research design can be looked at in two ways. On the one hand, it can reflect the entire research process, from problem conceptualisation to the literature review, research questions, methods, and conclusion. On other hand, it can be viewed from just the methodological perspectives by describing the specific methods to be used in the data gathering process (data collection and analysis).

This study employed an exploratory research design to understand corporate organisations' perceptions of public relations as a profession in Windhoek, Namibia. Exploratory research is conducted in order to help us find the problem that was not studied before, in-depth. Sue and Ritter (2012) state that exploratory research allows a researcher to examine a phenomenon in detail by engaging practitioners who are knowledgeable about a topic or process. It is not used to give conclusive evidence, but it helps in understanding the problem more efficiently (Sue & Ritter, 2012). Exploratory research occurs when a researcher investigates a new area of interest or when the phenomenon being studied itself is of

relative interest (Sue & Ritter, 2012; Babbie, 2011). Seeing that exploratory research is usually qualitative in nature, it was appropriate to locate this study within the interpretivist paradigm.

The interpretivist paradigm emphasises the understanding of the world from an individuals' perspective. This paradigm also assumes a relativist ontology in which a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations rather than a truth that can be determined by a process of measurement (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Thus, with interpretivism, researchers tend to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context, instead of generalising their understanding extensively (Broom & Sha, 2012). In this study, the interpretivism paradigm allowed participants to provide their views and understanding of public relations as a profession in Windhoek.

Interpretivism supports the use of qualitative methods in order to explore the lived experiences of individuals concerning the phenomena under investigation. According to Harwell (2011), the qualitative research approach or method is used to explore and understand meanings ascribed to social issues. Creswell (2014) and Babbie (2010) both agree that a qualitative approach seeks to examine and interpret observations in order to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationship in a non-numerical way. Creswell (2014) further articulates that the purpose of the qualitative approach is to discover and understand experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants. The qualitative approach therefore examines meaning, purpose, or reality.

Hesse-Biber (2016: p. 203) also notes that the purpose of the qualitative approach is to "interpret and construct the qualitative aspects of communication experiences", and that the main objective of qualitative approach is to "explore areas where limited or no prior information exists and/or to describe behaviours, themes, trends, attitudes, needs, or relations that are applicable to the units analysed."

Hesse-Biber (2016: p. 230) further states that:

a qualitative approach offers a unique position by which a researcher can ask questions in a particular way and provide greater perspectives on the social issues or problems. In the end, the qualitative researcher looks for 'meaning', that is, the social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations, as well as the meanings people embed into texts, images, and other objects.

Creswell (2014) indicates that, qualitative research is especially suitable in addressing a research problem where the variables are not well known and literature about the phenomenon is very scarce, hence, the need to learn from participants through exploration. Qualitative research was selected for this study because the study aimed at exploring and understanding the perception of public relations as a profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia.

3.2 Population, Sampling Technique and Procedure

In research terminology, population can be explained as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects which have a common characteristic that is of interest to the researcher (Richards & Morse, 2012). Wimmer and Dominick (2011) refer to population as the set of individuals or group with a common characteristic that the researcher needs to obtain results from. Majid (2018) also explains that a population consists of the entire group of interest from which the researcher selects a sample to study and this sample should be identified and recruited by one's research purpose and hypothesis, or research questions. The target population for this study consisted of Chief Executive Officers / Directors and Public Relations Practitioners of corporate organisations in Windhoek Namibia. In the context of this study, corporate organisation refers to both the private sector and public sector as established according to the various statutory instruments with diverse mandates (King III, 2013). It is not always possible to include all elements of a population in a single study, therefore a representative sample was selected to participate in this study. The term 'sampling' according to Majid (2018) refers to the scientific process of selecting respondents from a population of interest. Adler and Clarke (2010) believe that sampling is an important step in any research project since it is rarely practical, efficient, or ethical to study whole populations. Babbie (2010) concurs that the process of sampling allows a researcher to use a small portion of a population to draw relevant conclusion about the entire population.

Non-probability sampling, specifically the purposive sampling technique, was employed to select participants for the study. Purposive or purposeful sampling is regarded as the most common form of qualitative sampling and is "premised on the supposition that the researcher can discover new things and gain an understanding of the issue under study, and therefore requires a sample that he/she can learn the most from" (see Boeije, 2010: p. 36). Bhardwaj (2019) believes that the advantages of using this technique are that the researcher can produce desired outcome due to their ability to communicate directly to the audience. Marshal and Rossman (2011) concur that participants are selected based on their in-depth knowledge and experience on the issue under investigation.

In the context of the current study, the purposive sampling method allowed for the selection of Chief Executive Officers and Public Relations Professionals from selected corporate organisations. From the many corporate organisations, a purposive selection was done of which five (5) were private and other five (5) public organisations were selected. The ten (10) organisations were selected to provide appropriate information regarding the perception of public relations in Namibia. From these 10 organisations, one (1) CEO and one (1) PRP was selected based on their experience in the industry (more than five years in the industry) and having a deeper understanding of the issues relating to public relations generally, and in Namibia. This means that a total of 20 participants were targeted by the study (10 PRPs and 10 CEOs who meet the criteria mentioned above). The study relied on participants' willingness to take part in interviews, especially due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Where a CEO was not available for interview, managers heading the department were interviewed.

The information below gives an overview of the participants' demographics. This includes participants' professional designations, educational background (as well as specific areas of specialisation), age, length of practice in the field of public relations, formal education in public relations and related certifications or accreditations or affiliation to a professional body. It must be noted that the titles of the participants differ from one organisation to another.

Table 1: Demographics (Designation, Gender, Education level, Formal Education, Specialisation and Accreditation)

Designation	Gender	Education	Formal Education	Specialisation	Accredited PR
Executive Director	M	Degree	No	No	No
Chief Public Relations Officer	M	Master's	Yes	Yes	Yes
Former PRISA Chair	F	Honours	Yes	Yes	Yes
Head: Corporate Communications & Public Relations	F	Master's	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manager: Corporate Comms & PR	F	Master's	Yes	No	No

Chief Public Relations Officer	M	Degree	Yes	No	No
pecialists: Corporate Comms & PR	F	Honours	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manager: Corporate Affairs	F	Degree	No	No	No
Group Manager: Corporate Communications	F	Degree	No	No	No
Managing Director	M	Master's	No	No	No
Public Relations Officer	M	Degree	Yes	No	No
Deputy Executive Director	M	Degree	No	No	No
Senior Public Relations Officer	M	Degree	Yes	No	No
Director	M	PhD	No	No	No
Manager: Marketing & Communications	F	Degree	Yes	No	No
Executive Director	M	Master's	No	No	No
Media Officer	M	Degree	No	No	No
Managing Director	M	Master's	No	No	No
Corporate Communications Practitioner	F	Degree	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chief Information Officer	M	Degree	No	No	No

In terms of gender, there were more male than female participants. Specifically, 60 percent were male, and 40 percent were female. In terms of the highest qualifications, the table revealed that only 5 percent of the participants (executives) are PhD holders. In the same vein, only 30 percent are holders of the second highest degree which is the master's level. Most of the participants hold bachelor's degrees which accounts for 55 percent of the total score, while the remaining 10 percent were those with an Honours degree.

The area of specialisation amongst participants indicates that majority (45 percent) of the participants were in the field of Arts (*i.e., Master of Arts - Media*), followed by a sizeable portion of 30 percent of participants with Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees. About 20 percent of the participants specialised in the field of Public Relations, while Public Management showed to have the least participants in this study with only 5 percent of the total tally.

3.3 Data Collection Technique and Procedure

During data collection, face-to-face interviews were conducted. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011) data collection methods are tools used in the gathering of information about the subject under investigation. Daymon and Holloway (2011: p. 55) further state that, “in qualitative research, data is collected through words and consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge obtained through interviews, detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviours, actions recorded in observations, and excerpts, quotations, or entire passages”. Kabir (2016) believes that data collection approaches play an important role in impact evaluation by providing information useful to understand processes behind observed results and assess changes in people’s perceptions.

Wimmer and Dominick (2011: p, 68) describe interviews as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a one-on-one conversation focused on questions related to a research study”. Anyan (2013) mentioned that an interview is a highly used method of collecting data in qualitative research and it goes beyond conversation; “it is largely dependent on the purpose, and it is based on some form of structure”. The purpose and structure allow the researcher to move the conversation in a certain direction by asking most of the questions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The study adopted a semi-structured interview guide in order to allow for a flexible conversation and allow for questions to also emerge from the discussion between the researcher and the participants (see Boeije, 2010). Each participant was given an opportunity to engage further in seeking further clarity during the interview. Each interview lasted for 30 minutes.

Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face while observing COVID-19 protocols. In the case where it was not possible to meet face-to-face, an online interview was conducted, and this approach is supported by Babbie (2010) who believes that interviews can also be conducted over the telephone or via email. The interviews were recorded as a way of eliminating bias and correctly capturing participants views (Berazneva, 2014). Using a recorder has the advantage that the interview report is more accurate

although field notes were also taken to serve as backup documentation in case the recording failed. Recording the interviews also allowed for direct quotation of individual views in the presentation of the findings (Berazneva, 2014).

3.4 Data Analysis Technique and Procedure

Harm and Pack (2020) describe data analysis as the process of systematically applying logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense, and recap, and evaluate data. Flick (2014) agrees that data analysis represents a central step in qualitative research and has a major impact on the outcome of any research conducted. To provide meaning to the data collected for this study, a thematic analysis approach was considered as an appropriate technique for data analysis. Braun et al., (2016) state that the goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e., patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and to use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) believe that a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of collected data. To conduct thematic analysis, Clarke and Braun (2013) provide a six-phase guide which is a very useful framework for qualitative data analysis, and these are as follows:

- Familiarise yourself with your data collected;
- Assign the preliminary codes to each participant;
- Search for themes across different interviews;
- Review themes;
- Define and name themes; and,
- Produce a report.

Following the recommendations by Braun et al., (2016) on thematic analysis, the researcher began the process by transcribing interview recordings to a written format. Each participant was assigned a code, for instance, PR 1 - 2021. Transcribing the recordings was a necessary step to make the process of coding feasible. After transcribing, the transcripts were read and re-read to have a better understanding of participants' views. After reading the transcripts, the coding process began. The coding process was done manually, and numerous codes were generated in the initial coding process.

The second phase of coding involved reviewing the initial codes to identify emerging themes. After reviewing the themes that emerged from the second coding phase, the researcher then identified three main themes and sub-themes, which were informed by the theory and the study objectives. Within each theme, some sub-themes helped explain participants' views and these were: defining public relations, functions of public relations in organisations which were discussed under key sub-themes: namely stakeholder management and information management. The second theme was construction of the public relations profession by selected corporate organisations and this was discussed under the following theme: perception of public relations in corporate organisations. The last theme was the establishment of the required standards for the professionalisation of the PR profession and this theme was discussed under professionalism and current public relations status in Namibia, expertise, role of education, pre-requisite of public relations professionalism, and role of accreditation in the public relations profession. Participants' views were used to support the identified themes and sub-themes.

3.5 Trustworthiness

According to Polit and Beck (2014), trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. In this study, the researcher established the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Daymon and Holloway (2011) evaluate trustworthiness by looking at dimensions such as credibility, transferability, and dependability. Taylor and Medina (2013, p. 4 - 5) proclaim that credibility seeks to ensure that the researcher undertook prolonged engagement in the field, checked their interpretations with the participants, and displayed a process of learning. Dependability seeks to determine if the researcher engaged in developing inquiry. Confirmability allows others to verify and confirm the data, and transferability asks if there is enough data for the reader to assess their social context with the social setting of the research.

For the sake of maintaining credibility, the researcher interviewed and recorded each participant's views accurately. With regards to dependability, the researcher listened and re-read the data multiple times. In order to achieve confirmability, both the researcher and the supervisor went through the same data to confirm that coding represented views echoed by participants. Lastly, transferability was achieved through describing the process that inform how the study was conducted and how participants were involved.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the professional codes of ethics and guidelines for ethically responsible research as relevant to the study. Dooly et al., (2017) emphasise the need for researchers to always be ethical as far as possible; they should do their best not to over-interpret or misinterpret the data and represent the possible conclusions as closely as possible. For this research, it is important to note that before data was collected, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the Namibia University of Science and Technology's Ethical Committee (see Appendix 1). Karssing (2018) emphasises that ethical committees enhance and preserve the ethical practice in research. The researcher also took steps to ensure that established ethical standards were applied to the study. The researcher therefore ensured that informed consent (see McCormick, 2012) was obtained from the participants.

The researcher also explained the purpose of the research and informed the participants that their participation was voluntary (see Nelson et al., 2011) and that it was their right to withdraw whenever they were not comfortable to continue with the research participation. According to Francis (2011) the researcher must ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of the participants is not infringed by ensuring that the information collected was secured and not made available to anyone without interest in the study. The participants' confidentiality was strictly maintained, and the use of PR 1 - 2021 was used to protect the identity of participants.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodological approaches used in collecting and analysing data in line with the study's objectives and questions. It clearly outlined the research design and methodology including the data collection techniques, sampling procedure and research population. The chapter concluded with a discussion on ethical issues that were considered in the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study. The focus of the study was to explore how corporate organisations perceive public relations as a profession in Windhoek, Namibia. As highlighted in chapter 3, thematic analysis was employed to make meaning of the findings. The findings are thus presented based on the themes that emerged and in line with the objectives of the study. Finally, to protect the identity of the participants, each participant was assigned a code beginning from (PR 1 - PR 10 - 2021). This chapter therefore begins with brief discussions on the information of the participants.

4.1 Information of the participants

From the selected ten (10) corporate organisations, a total number of twenty (20) participants were selected to be interviewed. The demographics of participants focused on participant's gender, education/qualification, designations and area of specialisation, age, length of practice in the field of public relations / communication, and whether they had a formal education in public relations, as well as accreditation or affiliation to any professional body. It must be noted that the titles of the participants differed from one organisation to another. The discussion on the demographics has been provided in chapter 3.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

4.2.1 Defining Public Relations

In order to understand the role or functions of PR in organisations, it was imperative to first understand how participants defined public relations. Findings of this study reveal that public relations is defined differently and assigned different roles or functions by participants. Participant PR 2 - 2021 defined PR in the following manner:

I believe public relations is about making sure that information is shared in a way and manner that makes it easily understandable by the target audience... and through information sharing, public relations is the glue that keeps or holds the organisation and its publics together.

Another participant considers public relations as

the professional maintenance of the public image for the company to be viewed favourably in the eyes of the public (PR 6 - 2021).

Similarly, other participants believe that:

Public relations is about positioning an organisation in a favourable manner for the organisation to be accepted by different stakeholders. We should communicate the truths about the organisations' activities in a way in which stakeholders can understand and relate to the organisation (PR 3 - 2021).

Public relations is about "telling the good story of an organisation in order to create a good image for the organisation so that prospective customers and stakeholders can align their interest to the organisation (PR 4 - 2021).

I am looking at it from various angles. So, we look at what management wants to say in terms of our products to the stakeholders, mostly to customers, and what management wants to say to the staff, that is, internal communication. Public relations is about creating a positive image for the organisation through publicity services (PR 5 - 2021).

Public relations in essence is managing perceptions, it is managing the organisations and the key stakeholders, it is all about ensuring there is flow of communications between the organisations and the intended publics, keeping the channel of dialogue open basically (PR 9 - 2021).

Hykadeada (2012) also believes that public relations is about disseminating positive and newsworthy information about the organisation and its products and services. Wilcox *et al.* (2015: p, 42) maintain that public relations allows practitioners to disseminate information that furthers the interest of the organisation, and this leads to higher forms of relationships. Park and Rhee (2010: p, 2) also support the notion of creating a positive image for the organisation and this has been highlighted in one of the narratives above. Greenberg (2014) is of the view that differences in how one practitioner defines PR can be linked to the fact that public relations in many instances is contextualised and usually defined based on organisational provisions.

Some participants focused on the purpose of PR in their definition. For example, PR 1 - 2021 maintains that:

...public relations by any organisation should be associated with persuasion of the public, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders, assist the organisation's management in achieving organisational goals, belief to the transparency affairs and accountability, building relationships and reputational management, dissemination of information, and one thing that came out strong is credibility.

The narrative above ties in with Grunig (2011) who advises that transparency should be key in all the organisational dealings in order to maintain relationships with stakeholders. Some attributes of PR as mentioned by PR 1 - 2021 are also highlighted by other participants who state:

For me public relations deals with relationship and reputational management, building and maintaining the image of the organisation and enhancing the corporate image of an organisation's internal and external stakeholders (PR 3 2021).

...public relations is to ensure that all the stakeholders of the institution are well informed and put your best foot forward in terms of communicating who you are as a brand or as an institution to the public. I believe with any sort of human relationship there are ways in which things can be misinterpreted, and there are obviously avenues for miscommunication, so public relations should be able to help streamline and clarify the communication channels so that areas of miscommunication are reduced, so that the truth comes out. It is also a way to maximise and highlight on potential strengths and minimise the effect of potential weaknesses (PR 4 - 2021).

According to Butterick (2011), public relations is about maintaining mutually beneficial relationships and reputation management for an organisation. Wilcox et al., (2015: p, 75) maintain that public relations is about building a mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and its publics and relationships are stronger when they are mutually beneficial and characterised by 'win-win' results. Burson (2011) further explains that public relations is an applied social science that focuses, among other issues, on the management of ethical strategies to build relationships. What is clear and is commonly agreed upon from all the narratives above and literature cited, is that PR is about building and keeping relationships in order to achieve organisational goals.

The narratives above emphasise mainly that public relations is the channel through which information is disseminated to stakeholders (Theaker, 2012), organisations create a positive image for the organisation, tell a good story about themselves, form good relationships with stakeholders, reduce miscommunication by circulating accurate and relevant information, position the organisation in a favourable manner to its stakeholders and above all, uphold the truth about the organisation. Furthermore, it is revealed through these definitions that public relations is associated with persuasion and assisting the organisation to achieve its goals.

4.2.2 Functions of Public Relations in Organisations

Research done by Butterick (2011) indicates that to understand public relations you need to look at its core functions in organisations. The core functions of public relations are quite diverse but have crosscutting synergies within the different organisations. Moreover, the core functions of public relations are applied differently based on the set-up, the environment, perceptions as well as the overall mandate of the organisation. This view is also echoed by one participant:

I have realised that with my experience, the functions of the public relations profession depend on any given organisation. It depends on the responsibility and nature of any organisation. And therefore, when they hire, of course their job description depends on their type of organisation. You will find that some organisations have both the marketing and communication together, others have stakeholder's engagement plus marketing or separate, but it depends on what are the needs of the organisation. But then again if we go for the textbook, we know what the responsibility would be (PR 7 - 2021).

The narrative above, and views presented below, indicate the function of public relations as understood by the participants.

4.2.2.1 Stakeholder Management

The narratives below show that one of the functions of PR in organisation deals with stakeholder relations. Stakeholder management places emphasis on the importance of having good relations with different stakeholders, including the media. Participants explain:

In an ideal situation, the functions, and benefits of the public relations to the organisation are effective stakeholders' relations, that's if we were to do it right. The function of the public relations when it comes to stakeholders' relations is meeting the media houses. I should be able to have a good relationship with the media so that in the future when my boss is under fire about something, the media should not shy away from enquiring the truth about it from me. They should be able to know that we have a friend at that organisation, and we would not want to put a friend in jeopardy, and that is the important part that we are missing at our organisation. We must build relationship with the media houses so that when we meet at events, we are not strangers (PR 1 - 2021).

I regard stakeholder relations and management as the key functions of public relations ... In a very supportive environment, the function of public relations in terms of stakeholder relations is, for example, meeting the media houses. I should be able to have coffee time with the media, hold a conversation without fear, and be able to count on them especially when we are in situation that they will be able to write factually about our organisation and not sensationalise it (PR 6 - 2021).

Broom and Sha (2012) believe that media relations are a combination of management tasks and decisions aimed at meeting opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment. Media relations are one component of public relations designed to support marketing objectives (Hallahan, 2012), such as raising awareness, informing, and educating target audiences, gaining understanding, building trust, giving consumers a reason to buy, and motivating consumer acceptance. Stakeholder management is not seen as limited to the media, participants indicate the need for building relations with internal and other external stakeholders (which are not media). PR 7 - 2021 opines:

I see public relations mainly designed or created to build trust and credibility within certain groups. For instance, public relations institutions or corporate organisations, they should be able to build relationships with other organisations outside, the stakeholders outside or even the internal stakeholders (P R 7 - 2021).

The great thing about being a public relations professional is you contribute significantly to the organisation through building relationships... (PR 4 - 2021).

Functions of public relations are unlimited ... you are that function that glue, fixing and mending things for the organisation and bringing people together (PR 4 - 2021).

The narratives above emphasise the importance of building relations with different people who may have an interest in the organisation. Stakeholder management is seen as a means of achieving trust and credibility among stakeholders. Grunig (2013) believes that stakeholder management is one of the core functions and communication plays a key role in ensuring lasting relations between the organisation and its internal or external stakeholders. Stakeholder management is the most visible tool that any organisation should maintain to keep the relationship going and public relations professional must make sure that stakeholders are taken care of.

Linked to stakeholder management is the importance of reputation or good image for any organisation. Reputation management or image building is seen as another function of PR. PR 3 - 2021 describes that *“Basically, you must build relationships between different stakeholders for the organisations to be upheld favourably in the eyes of the public...”*.

Participant (PR 9 - 2021) states:

Public relations function basically is to maintain a positive image of the organisation. A public relations professional must ensure that the public knows where to knock and who to talk to when they have concerns. Any interested and affected parties should know who the point of contact for an organisation is, (PR 9 - 2021).

What is emerging from the findings is that reputation or image building is crucial for an organisation as a brand. Participant (PR 8 - 2021) contends that:

Public relations help build relationship and manage reputation ... They also assist to personalise your brand and be able to raise the profile of the organisation.

Similarly participant PR 5 - 2021 believes that:

Public relations professionals have a very important function that has to do with the credibility of the brand; this is so that consumers out there can understand what your organisation does. By building credibility, the public, and stakeholders will have trust in your brand (PR 5 - 2021).

For some participants the issue of brand and image building cannot be separated from the very work that PR practitioners do, and their personal conduct. Participants comment:

Surely you want a good image portrayed out there about your organisation. So, you must make sure that all information sent out must portray your organisation in a right way. Information about your organisation's brand should be disseminated correctly. And that's what we do here at our organisation. I guess we are doing a good job because everywhere you go the brand is visible, the brand has been valued, the brand has been looked up to, the employees live the brand, and we maintain the way we communicate. So, it all stands back to the way public relations professionals disseminate information to the stakeholders (PR 2 - 2021).

Another function that is very crucial to public relations is maintaining the positive image of the organisation. We do this by not only attending to queries that are received, but by ensuring that certain corporate identity of the organisation is upheld (PR 1 - 2021).

Public relations is about managing a brand and every individual is a brand. When we dress and make ourselves look fabulous, what we are doing is public relations. Every individual has a duty to fulfil to themselves by putting the best foot forward (PR 2 - 2021).

When I think of public relations, I see ethics - being an ambassador for the organisation, doing good, being an advocate, I think of the many hats we must wear to achieve our mission. And I also see anticipation, analysing the interpretation of key, core functions, analyse the attitude of the public into different strategies etc, and when all these functions are done correctly, they represent a good organisational image (PR 3 - 2021).

Corporate reputation management has over the years become a key business driver in organisations in the world over, as argued by Gotsi and Wilson (2001). Cabral (2012) also denotes that it is corporate reputation that gives an organisation that competitive edge that sets it apart from other competing firms, a view that is also supported by Porter and Kramer (2006). Furthermore, research by the Ethics Resource Centre (2011) indicates that corporate reputation is a major influence in customers' decisions to use an organisation's products and services and enables the organisation to attract and retain the best talent and this has propelled most organisations to increasingly invest in corporate reputation management (Alsop 2004).

4.2.3 Information Management

Information management is another function of PR that emerged from participant responses. Based on the findings, information management focuses mainly on information dissemination, production, and social media management. Information management is seen as a key function in PR as participants assert:

Information management is very key, it is not just sending out media releases, statements, and all the things that we know. I need to think of information management as being able to know exactly what to release and what not to release. Without good experience of public relations or being in the public relations industry, you will not be able to know what to do (PR 10 - 2021).

Information management is very important; you cannot leave anybody in the dark. As public relations professionals, we must ensure that there is healthy communications and healthy dialogues between an organisation and its stakeholders. Managing our information well gives us an opportunity to make informed decision... (PR 10 - 2021).

Information management helps practitioners to focus on disseminating information to different stakeholders. For example, PR 1 - 2021 contends that:

The overall function of PR is to disseminate information. We are more of information conveyers. As public relations professionals we coordinate all public relations activities, media relations and all the placements in the local newspapers, we do the writing and editing, productions, speaking, research and we do coordinate information pertaining to training.

Information management places emphasis on sharing information with both internal and external stakeholders.

Public relations professionals are charged with responsibilities of maintaining both internal and external communications by coordinating all the queries and enquiries that are coming from both stakeholders and these enquiries must be attended to. We live up to the King Report these days, in the King Report it is a requirement that you need to share information and engage with your stakeholders, you must ethically share correct information and you must have your report-back on time. I don't think all of these is different from any other organisation states (PR 2 - 2021).

We must communicate to our internal stakeholders to get the messages across and to allow them to engage with us and obviously with management. Public relations should be valued as a strategic function in any organisation (PR 10 - 2021).

...public relations function is to organise events, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, and these are platforms where we basically communicate our products to the public (PR 10 - 2021).

According to Burson (2011), a principal objective of information dissemination is not only to promote awareness but to also to nurture and maintain relations with stakeholders. Wilcox et al., (2015) further emphasise the need for information dissemination as it contributes to the development of organisations. Disseminating accurate information assists corporate organisations to reach their targets as clients will always invest in organisations that are transparent. Benyman (2010) has argued that public relations don't just focus on business products, it also assists in the shaping of strategic messages. While information dissemination is crucial, the production of messages or content is equally important and is another function performed by PR practitioners. PR 10 - 2021 believes that:

As public relations professionals one of our duties is to develop and manage content. This is the function that is so crucial as it has to do with research, you are tasked to come up with the right content, content collection, content analysis of information and translate it in the language that everyone understands ... we do presentations, brochures, pamphlets, direct mail feature articles specially for print media. In terms of publications, we write those articles that appear as well from time to time. We are also tasked with speechwriting. We coordinate and edit organisational annual reports, produced, and published and upload all information on our website (PR 10 - 2021).

Another participant explains:

In some Organisations, Ministries and Agents (OMAs), the role of public relations professionals is to assist with the drafting of speeches and statements for the ministers and assist with the production of publications such as newsletters and magazines within our organisation. I will include press writing, journals, reports, flyers, all these publications are done by our public relations professional within the organisation ... photographs, audio, coordinate all the visual, making sure the production is done in terms of the campaign requirements and editing video production, once the whole campaign is completed its all dependant on public relations professional (PR 3 - 2021).

Another role of public relations is to manage social media platforms. Social media has expanded the roles of PR in organisations. For (PR 3 – 2021):

Another crucial function of public relations is managing social media platforms. Public relations is designed in such a way that it helps us to do our media representation correctly. We all know that social media helps organisations to market themselves. It is a digital platform where your organisation can be really marketed and at the same time it can also destroy your organisation if not correctly managed. The beauty about social media is that the more your organisation is mentioned it will matter. Sometimes people will talk about / mention your organisation in a wrong way, so it is the duty of the public relations when the organisation is mentioned in a negative way to align it correctly (PR 3 -2021).

Participant (PR 4 - 2021) agrees with participant PR 3 – 2021:

Social media will always have something negative to say about your organisation. It could be misinformation read somewhere. As public relations professional, all you must do is look at the said information and think, is this factual? And if not, it is your duty to correct it. For me social media is very important, this is where public relations add value to the organisation. You can use social media to build your brand image. There is a misconception that public relations professionals promote products, as a matter of fact, public relations drive an entire organisation to its growth and yield to success. When it is done correctly, it can create a more positive branding image in the mind of consumers and provides an early way to better engage with business investment and shape all aspects of your business. Public relations professionals must be able to assess as to where do our stakeholders get the information, what are these platforms, are they accessible, and be available to those platforms to give the correct information, in this way you manage perception (PR 4 - 2021).

The narratives above underscore the value of social media for PR and knowing how to use it. Participant (PR 5 - 2021) specifically refers to some of strategies implemented in other to manage communication on social media platforms:

In our organisation, we actually have a very active Facebook page, in fact all our social media handles are very active at the moment and with the assistance now of the digital media officer who is been appointed, it just makes it quite easier uploading and also monitoring what is been

said on the online space (PR 5 - 2021).

The emergence of technology has progressively transformed the practices of public relations widely (Watson, 2017) and as such many organisations are using social media to communicate with various publics. Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012) maintain that with the advent of social media, the public relations function has become more useful to organisations as it constantly allows for synchronisation of conversations and the sharing of user-generated material using the Web 2.0 environment. Grunig (2013) underscores the core functions of public relations as communications, stakeholder relations, and ensuring community goodwill which is usually done in various ways including managing digital media space.

Basically, in terms of the definition and functions of PR, Gruning (2013) states that organisations should understand better the functions of public relations. This will enable PR to contribute towards the realisation of organisational goals and objectives. Narratives above highlight the role and importance of communication, through the PR function, in organisations. This communication is clearly for both internal and external stakeholders. This aligns with assumptions of the excellence theory which places emphasis on symmetrical communication. Symmetrical communication, according to Grunig (2008) takes into consideration interests of the organisation and the public and this will lead towards effective stakeholder management and consequently good relationships.

4.3 Construction of public relations profession by selected corporate organisations

To establish how corporate organisations construct or regard public relations in their organisations, the study focused on understanding the perceptions of PR as a profession. The findings are discussed below.

4.3.1 Perception of Public Relations Profession in Corporate Organisations

Research by White and Park (2010) indicates that public relations has been portrayed in the media in a consistently negative manner over several decades and this may influence public perceptions about the profession. Perceptions about public relations affect the perceived credibility of the profession and influence whether people see public relations as valuable to society. This sentiment is also shared by the following participant who suggests that:

Perceptions about the public relations profession affect the perceived credibility of the profession and influence whether people see public relations as valuable to society (P 3 - 2021).

The narratives from participants clearly show how PR is perceived by different sectors in society. Participants explain:

Perception of the public relations professionals has been misinterpreted. Currently in Namibia, as long as you have worked with NBC especially the TV production, and you have a beautiful face, or you look presentable or perhaps you are a model and a mixture of both or rather confusing qualifications then you qualify to be in public relations. It should not be like that, public relations is a profession that must be valued like other profession such as doctor, lawyers, accountants etc. concurs (PR 4 - 2021).

They look at us public relations professionals as event planners. People have always thought when you have an event management diploma or degree then you qualify into the public relation profession. The person has no background about public relation or communications qualifications, all he/she has is event management or project management qualifications – that is a very wrong perception. Yes, being a public relations professional also requires you to know more about how events are executed, from the beginning to the end, but you must have a degree in public relations or communications and events management should be an added qualification (PR 3 - 2021).

...some still perceive public relations professionals as spin doctors. They still see public relations professionals as people trying to hide the truth from the public and painting a good picture on behalf of the organisation. Public relations addresses crises and corporate organisations' values... (PR 10 - 2021).

Some of the narratives above, are supported by literature as Adjei (2015) has argued that public relations is just there for information sharing and damage control, an attempt to hide or disguise a bad image about the organisation. Thus, even journalists tend to believe that public relations practitioners are more inclined to mislead the public than is reported to be the case (White & Park, 2010). For other participants, their perception of PR is influenced by what they consider to be purpose of PR in an organisation. PR 4 - 2021 expresses that:

Public relations is mostly regarded as a function that defends the organisation in order to maintain a positive image. But I think because public relations are the eyes and ears of the organisation, they see and hear more about what is happening and what people are complaining

about the organisation, for that they should be able to initiate responses. I see public relations as a profession that should keep the public well informed about what is happening within the organisation. (PR 4 - 2021).

Similarly, PR 2 - 2021 explains:

For me I perceive public relations as a profession that influences the opinions of the public by e.g., introducing new products and revamping the image of existing products, showcasing, and building a brand, caring, and valuing employees, advertising financial aspects to current and potential investors, and managing a crisis to do damage control (PR 2 - 2021).

While other participants highlight their perceptions on what can be realised through PR, some participants highlight limitations or challenges they encounter in the practice. These challenges or limitations arguably indicate how organisations perceive or regard PR. In highlighting the limitations, participants mentioned the following:

For me, my perception of public relations is that it is a limited function. In Namibia, especially in the public sector, us public relations professionals, we are so limited even when you want to explore further, you are limited. It also happens with ideas, when you bring your idea to the table sometimes it is shut down by the boss, and this is very frustrating, when you are lucky, it will be approved but it takes a whole lot of convincing, that's how limited we are. During the first time when COVID-19 hit and the whole country was under lockdown, donations were coming in from sponsors. I approached my executive director with an idea that we should write an article to the media informing them how much donations we have collected and where those donations are coming from. The response I received was not a conducive one... later in the second month, somebody approached the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister approached the executive director, who then came to me on the same matter I had suggested before. At this point the matter is supported because it is coming from the top. Sometimes you want to be proactive in issues that matters, you want to inform the nation on the activities which are undertaken by the organisation, but you are limited (PR 5 - 2021).

Look, the situation we have in Namibia, for example, that we are still doing traditional public relations, drafting the media release, having it approved by the boss, and it takes 3 days to come

back to you, by the time the media receive the final document, it is already old (PR 3 - 2021).

PR 6 - 2021 agrees with the above limitations and contends that:

It prevents public relations professionals to expand their ability to even think outside the box. This is because sometimes our supervisors are not even from the public relations background themselves. On top of that you will find that the unit is understaffed, sometimes it is just one person appointed, it is mostly a loner person who is just there to take pictures for the organisation. How do you enhance a profession if the function is not supported? (PR 6 - 2021).

For other participants, the limitations come from management not having confidence in the capabilities of PR practitioners. PR practitioners are seen as incapable of doing independent work and this is expressed by the following participant:

Especially with public institutions, there is a perception that public relations professionals are incapable of standing by themselves, they cannot do work without being supervised. That means everything you write as a public relations professional it must first go through all the channels up to the top before it is approved for you to send it to the media... they do not realise that as public relations professionals, we need to be left to be independent, we need to be trusted by our superiors, we cannot be running to them for everything. When they let us use our full potential, they will understand the full value of what public we can bring to the table. We are very much capable and all we need is just the trust and support from our superiors and not babysitters, concludes (PR 3 - 2021).

Mutambo (2014) is of the view that the public relations profession is regarded as 'just' information officers or media officers and that the PR position is fused in a specific organisation's structures where it is regularly used as an emergency management tool, as opposed to an important management role. It is for this reason those public relations professionals often find themselves in the position of having to persuade management on how important the profession is to their respective organisations (David, 2018). Furthermore Grunig (2011) maintains that despite decades of maturity and proven worth, PR remains a nonessential organisational function because it is seen as a nice-to-have function rather than a necessity. Busy (2013) believes that top executives perceive public relations as a legitimate and necessary organisational function, which is taken for granted in a modern company and in the normative institutions and this is confirmed by the narratives above.

Participants also reflected on the dominant practice of hiring anyone who they consider as capable of doing PR. The narratives reflect how organisations perceive PR as a task that can be pursued by anyone regardless of their qualification. Participants opined:

The perception some organisations have is that if you can read news on television, you can also be a good public relations professional. News anchors are provided with scripts, as they appear on TV, they do not read from their head, they are reading from an autoque, and this is something some organisations do not understand. Whereas being a public relations professional you are trained how to write your own release, speech etc., you are not provided with anything at all. So, the perception that TV presenter can be appointed as public relations professionals especially when they have no qualification is wrong (PR 7 - 2021).

In Namibia, they take TV and radio reporters who are fed with information, recruit them into public relations positions. In some organisations you will find a legal practitioner speaking on behalf of the organisation. This perception has been carried out for some time now and it hinders PR professionals who are qualified to do the job (PR 2 - 2021).

Linked to the above narratives is the employment of people based on personal relationships. This view also buttresses the idea that PR is a profession which can be done by any individual regardless of their skills set or qualification. PR 7 - 2021 comments:

...another perception I have observed, and I saw it at PRISA Namibia, they hire based on who they know and who they have seen or close to them. I do not see any change at this point because I am still looking at people who are sitting in key positions in public relations, especially in executive positions. There are still familiar faces whom we have studied together with in the same class and just because they were every day seen on TV, they get to be chosen to go for interviews, surprisingly, they do not last long, you will read about that same person jumping from one organisation to another organisation (PR 7 - 2021).

Sha (2011) contends that a standardised education based on a theoretical body of knowledge is one of the important aspects of maintaining the credibility of profession. This goes against the perceptions expressed here of employing anyone regardless of their qualification. Mutambo (2014) also believes that the struggle between the PR practitioners and journalists continues as they fight for attention, to prove who is worth more than the other. David (2018) also revealed that senior journalists and former

reporters are confused for public relations professionals since they are likely to be expressive enough, popular, or that they are in the communication field.

The placement of PR or the positions that are assumed by PR professionals in many organisations also reflects how organisations perceive PR to be. PR 5 - 2021 believes *“that the placement of the public relations profession in corporate organisations depends on each organisational structure, although it is not the same in public sector”*. This view does reflect that different organisations will place PR at different levels of their organogram, largely based on what they believe the PR function can achieve. Participant 9 - 2021, maintains that:

In public organisations, the highest employed public relations professional you will get is chief PRO comparing to private organisations. Private organisations hire executive head who sits at executive level where decisions are being made. Public sector still perceives public relations as a function that should fall under Human Resources or Administration (PR 9 - 2021).

Other participants expressed the following:

When you talk about a private organisation, I will not know how they do their structure, but in public service is a total nightmare. In public service, different organisations have their own different structure where to place the public relations. The Office of the President for example, I believe they have the director, they have the spokesperson, media officer and information officer and press secretary. That office is well-equipped. Ours here, I am alone to juggle it all, and I am supposed to report to the executive director, but I am reporting to the Human Resources and Finance (PR 6 - 2021).

...yes, to some degree, each function is linked to another as we need each other to function better. But we need to know where each function begins and where it should end, we should respect boundaries, we should respect each profession (PR 2 - 2021).

To further highlight the challenge of PR placement in organisations, participants explained that:

...when we are placed at the right table, when we are part of the executive committee, when we are part of the decision-making, we are seen as a valued partner in managing the organisation's reputation, managing all the crises on time because we have the first-hand information. We take this function very seriously in our organisation. We know very much that this is a very crucial

function, and it brings in profit when it is well supported. For me I consider public relations as strategic corporate communications or corporate affairs. The public relations professional has a place around the executive committee table in our organisation, this is the only way you will see the value of it and this is the only way you will see bigger roles being assigned to the profession (PR 3 - 2021).

...public relations professionals are shadow managers of executives. They are designed to advise the executive on matters of importance. In other words, a public relations professional is like your personal assistant and if you are smart enough to carry her/him along everywhere you go, you stand a good chance of good publicity yourself as a person, a good publicity for your office and good information management because that person will also be your confidante, will not be able to leak out information without consulting you first (PR 2 - 2021).

Grunig (2013) states that the structure of the organisation, especially the placement of public relations in organisations, will determine a profession's ability to change management behaviour. The public relations profession should be part of management because the function has that kind of authority to be able to advise management. Bowen et al., (2012: p. 42) concur with Grunig's sentiment and explain that having PR as part of management is the only way public relations can influence the attitude of management.

Meng et al., (2012, p. 33) advocated for the public relations profession to be part of the executive team. The executive level expects public relations professionals to act as facilitators with advisory influence (see Busy, 2013, p. 82). Public relations is a strategic management function and it should be perceived as such. In the view of Dozier (2013), strategic management deals with the "process of managing the pursuit of the accomplishment of the organisational mission coincidental with managing the relationship of the organisation to its environment". Smith (2017) points out that public relations is, in most cases, not viewed as strategic management but rather as a vehicle for production and distribution of messages. This means that the public relations unit is used more in terms of publicity purposes than strategic management, therefore it is not likely to be part of the decision-making process for organisations and this has hindered the progress and lowered the credibility of the profession. When public relations is represented in decision-making, effective stakeholders' relations and forging good relationships with stakeholders will yield profit for organisations.

Grunig (2008), in the excellence theory, believes that if the public relations function is placed with other management functions, it will help organisations build lasting relations. He further argues that when PR is sublimated to other functions it usually results in asymmetrical communication (Grunig, 2008), which will serve the interests of one party. Thus, when PR is integrated with other management functions in an organisation (Grunig, 2008), it will give maximum contribution towards success. Results from participants have shown that perceptions about the public relations as a profession differ depending on the organisational set-up.

4.4 Establishment of the required standards for the professionalisation of the Public Relations profession

This section presents findings on the standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations profession amongst corporate organisations. Various sub-themes are discussed.

4.4.1 Professionalism and the current PR status in Namibia

Willens (2015) explains that professionalisation is a social process by which any trade or occupation transforms itself into a true profession of the highest integrity and competence. It is a process whereby occupations have become, or seek to become, publicly recognised as professions according to the degree to which they meet the alleged criteria. In Namibia, there is no PR body that governs the practice. According to participant PR 1 - 2021:

In Namibia currently it is a whole nightmare, we do not have standards because a public relations profession is for everyone who can write and speak well and has a presentable face. Coupled with that is that we do not have a local professional body that helps us to set standards and serves the interest of the profession within the industry (PR 1 - 2021).

Other participants also explain:

The public relations profession is currently not regulated, I would love to see that somehow being done. Although we currently have PRISA Namibia Chapter, it is not serving the profession accordingly. All the rules and standards are set by South Africa as PRISA is from there. They also set the programmes and courses that public relations professionals attend, in fact they determine everything, and Namibia and other southern countries must comply (PR 4 - 2021).

We have been under PRISA's shadow for more than two decades and it is time we have our own regulatory body. Look at the chartered accountants for instance, they have their regulatory local body, and we need something similar. It is the only way to minimise chance-takers, people who just come into the industry because of publicity (PR 4 - 2021).

Participants have also alluded to the benefits of having a local PR regulatory/governing body.

Participants believe that a local governing body will assist in protecting the PR profession.

...I will recommend that Namibia first of all, establishes its own public relations professional body in general to serve the interest of the public relations professionals in the country and set standards...should one day Namibia decide to have a local professional public relations body, it will be very difficult to have cross-cutting standards. The industry will be protected and there will be a level of professionalism in the public relations industry (PR 1 - 2021) concludes.

The local body will be a gate that will avoid any person coming into the industry unless that person has gone through the professional training and is properly accredited. Coupled with qualifications, experience and accreditation, the public relations profession will be a respectful profession (PR 3 - 2021).

...the body will make it mandatory through standards and the body will also make sure that all these small mushrooming corporate public relations or events organisations that people just come up with, or all these social media enthusiasts follow the right channel of establishing these organisations. They need to be accredited first which is currently not the case (PR 5 - 2021).

...When we have our local body, we will give a chance to those that are passionate about the profession, they will get involved, they will build their professional career and form part of a knowledge management... A local body is very important, it is very needed in Namibia. A local body will see to it that every graduate in the profession is registered and recognised. There are so many graduates who are passionate about public relations and are not members of the current chapter because they do not see many benefits, they are being disadvantaged and losing out on number of years into the profession (PR 6 - 2021).

The benefits of a regulatory body will assist to determine standards of a profession e.g., qualification. It is important to have qualifications, to be accredited and to belong to a professional body that assesses standards. And then experience, in terms of experience it is also

important to have some sort of standards, cross-cutting standards. And again, it is difficult to do that without a professional body. Once you have a professional body it develops courses that need to be accredited for approval by the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), that's where standards come in because when you are Corporate Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP) then you know what level you are in terms of NQA levels (PR 2 - 2021).

The narratives above clearly show that there is a lack of a regulatory body governing the practice of PR in Namibia. While there is a PRISA chapter, it is also evident that the benefits of having a local regulatory system is much more preferred. Sha (2011) explains that having a professional body or association, being recognised, and acknowledged by the public through accountability, certification, or accreditation is important towards professionalisation.

Participant (PR 3 - 2021) agrees with (PR 2 – 2021) above:

Added to what I just mentioned, I think professionalism is very important in any profession. We have witnessed the tug of war between administrators and public relations officers, where one had the administrator feel that information does not get disseminated correctly and public relations professionals also have a feeling that they do not get the support they deserve. This is because administrators feel that they can do a better job by disseminating information, whereas this function lies with the public relations professional. A distinction that can only be made clear once the standards are set (PR 3 – 2021).

Other participants also support the idea of having a local regulatory body:

The world has changed so much, and it keeps changing every day. There are so many new ideas coming in, new standards, new rules and regulations are being amended into the body itself. All these needs someone who will represent them. Who better than a professional body to speak on behalf of the profession, condemning what is wrong and always upholding the good deeds (PR 5 - 2021).

I know a lot of people constantly always saying, "too many regulations make an industry rigid, we are doing well with PRISA, we must just stick with PRISA". Namibian public relations professionals are paying a high price for being members of PRISA which I think will be a bit less when it is local. On top of that you still pay high price for attending courses set by PRISA locally or in South Africa. We need to reduce all these costs by establishing our own. So many qualified public relations professionals currently don't feel or enjoy the benefits of their membership (PR 6 - 2021).

Believe me, a year can pass by without any activity organised locally and membership fees just goes to waste. PRISA of course will have a schedule of courses or programmes to attend for the year, but as a Namibian, you need a flight ticket to go there every time you want to attend, which is very costly.

Participant's views indicate limitations they have experienced due to the absence of a local regulatory body. PRISA Namibia is seen as limited for the Namibian context hence the conviction from participants that a local regulatory body will be able to come up with Namibian standards and ethics for the practice. PR 7 2021 comments:

The MICT needs to take up this initiative, it will be much easier to establish and regulate if the initiative comes from the government. When the MICT takes up this initiative, they will set up the standards, rules and regulations and all training will be channelled through MICT to the body. The local body will be conducting training tailor-made to the Namibian standards and the ethics around it. The body will teach public relations professionals why it is important to conduct yourself ethically and then when they understand that ticket to the PR profession yourself in an ethical manner. Public relations professionals will also know that, if I do not adhere to the set rules and standards then I will kiss goodbye to the profession. This will also eliminate what is currently happening in PRISA Namibia Chapter, which has become a friend zone kind of chapter ...we once approached the MICT when I was still chairperson of the Namibia chapter, and that was during the time of the Honourable Minister Tjekero Tweya and he agreed that we can meet with him. Our idea was to introduce PRISA to him as a Minister so he could speak on our behalf in the Cabinet. The minister was keen on meeting us and then suddenly, the reshuffling came up, the idea since then died, narrates PR 7 - 2021).

A local regulatory body will also standardised practice, required qualifications as well as remuneration packages for PR practitioners. This is supported by the views below:

The body will assist many organisations in setting up requirements for the public relations profession. Currently, when an advert is placed in the local papers, you will see so many differences in those adverts, some require a degree and 7 years of experience in the industry and some require a degree with 3 years of experience in the industry, but it is the same job...a local body will be advising these organisations on what the requirements are as per set standards. If it

is a junior role, then a set requirement will be provided and if it is a senior role, a set requirement will be provided, and any added requirements will be added advantage. Setting up standards for the profession also helps in terms of remunerations or package. Of course, we know that each organisation remunerates their employees based on the gradings or on the tier where the organisation is categorised, but the bottom line is, it is important to have those who are less remunerated on a market-related grade, be it in public organisation or in a private organisation (PR 8 - 2021).

The public relations profession can also be like these profound professions, all we need to do is formalise what is required, set standards that will strengthen the profession and allow public relations professionals to practice. Professionalism is also very important, and we will only attain professionalism once we have set the standards required in the profession. Currently, so many chief public relations practitioners are leaving their jobs to join private sector. One contributing factor is that public relations professionals in private organisations pay better than chief public relations practitioners in public organisations. When you look at these two individuals, they both have the same degrees and the same years of experience but are remunerated differently due to the fact that there are no standards set in place (PR 9-2021).

To achieve all the above-mentioned, having a local regulatory body is imperative. A local regulatory body will be a watchdog, guiding all organisations on how they should conduct themselves when they choose to be part of the body. Standards will also be set so that professionals should work hard to achieve, maintain the standards, and conduct themselves professionally. A regulatory body will also allow for PR practitioners to follow ethical practice. One participant comment:

... a regulatory body will be able to set ethics for the profession. The body will have a team of passionate expertise so eager to keep the profession protected and conduct themselves in a professional manner. In this way we will not have people just coming in because of the good salary. ...it will look at professional conduct, ethical conduct, professional practice, recognition and prestige of the profession, advocacy for the profession, ensuring that the strategic value-add in the organisation is coming out (PR 10 – 2021).

Having a local regulatory body will also support the process of accreditation of the Public Relations profession. According to Bowen (2015), every public relations professional must be accredited. This is

the way to formalise the qualification for a wider recognition spectrum. Being accredited means being regionally acceptable, and this will assist practitioners to tap into knowledge of other professionals from others.

Participant PR 7 - 2021 explains:

For public relations to have a stronger value, it must belong to a professional body, a body that will regulate the profession. There is a reason why PRISA is in existence even though it is expensive, this is because it has certain rules, ethics, and standards that all PR practitioners should adhere to (PR 7 - 2021).

The above results indicate that most participants perceived regulation and accreditation as a form of awarding PR professionals with credibility. Accreditation bestows confidence in candidates; it helps demonstrate competence and it enhances professional credibility.

4.4.2 Expertise

Findings also reveal that expertise is an important aspect towards guarding the interests of the PR profession and this can contribute towards the professionalisation of PR. A local regulatory body is seen as an essential instrument towards ensuring that people with the right expertise are hired as PR practitioners. Participant PR 9 - 2021 explains:

...a local regulatory body of public relations will help to regulate the PR profession. There is so much happening within the industry, and it needs to be regulated. The body's existence is to make sure that there are rules when entering the profession that must be adhered to because at the moment anyone with journalism background or marketing can be hired as PR professional even though the candidate did not specialise in PR or corporate communications, there is so much mixed up on who should be a PR professional, and this has to be sorted out very soon (PR 9 - 2021).

Other participants opine:

Journalists qualify for public relations positions because they also go through the same training and obtain the same degrees as public relations professionals. The distinction between the two professionals is that journalists write for the masses while public relations professionals write on

behalf of the organisation ...when you compare the two, each one is an expert in their profession. That does not mean the two professions have the same job duties. Journalists are trained to be journalists, write like a journalist, and public relations professionals are trained as public relations professionals and they only write or speak on behalf of the organisation when it is necessary to speak... We are different and we do different jobs daily. We are experts in our field, and we have undergone so many trainings after obtaining the degree to be where we are today. We continue to strive ahead to be best in what we do every day. We may have obtained the same degree as journalists, but we specialise in a different career path. As public relations professionals, we are experts when it comes to speaking for the organisation we work for (PR 1 - 2021).

The public relations function is a very distinctive profession and that always requires a bachelor's degree and the relevant experience of 3 – 5 years (PR 3 - 2021).

These narratives are placing emphasis on the importance of expertise in a practice. Therefore, ensuring that only practitioners with the relevant PR expertise are hired is important for the credibility of the profession. Related to expertise is the role of education towards professionalisation of PR. Marini et al. (2016) have argued that for a profession to be considered a profession it must possess certain characteristics which, include among others, command over a body of knowledge, formal standards of conduct, extended training and education and the establishment of formal associations. This view has been supported by the narratives above. In order to further buttress the value of education for the PR profession, one participant comments:

The role of education is to produce programmes that are beneficial to everyone. Universities are designed to equip everyone who is willing to learn with knowledge, but skills are taught through your working experience. PRISA Namibia's role is to equip public relations professionals with management courses. This is where you start developing your professional skills to be able to perform better at your profession. Several courses are introduced based on the needs of the profession. An example is crisis communication, this is one of the key important components of public relations that is a must to learn. (PR 2 - 2021).

In line with these observations, Sha (2011) confirms that a standardised education based on a theoretical body of knowledge, subscribing to codes of ethics, belonging to a professional body or association will contribute to professionalisation.

4.4.3 Pre-requisite of Public Relations Professionalism

Participant PR 1 - 2021 explains:

I believe professionalism is trait that is acquired, and it involves consistently achieving high standards, both visibly and behind the scenes - whatever your role or profession. I think professionalism is not the job you do, it's how you do the job (PR 1 – 2021).

For me an undergraduate degree must be a pre-requisite, one must have a degree in order to be allowed to practice public relations (PR 2 – 2021).

Participant PR 2 - 2021 expresses the same sentiment as PR 1 - 2021 in that, an undergraduate degree should be a must-have. You must have at least a degree to be admitted in the profession. Added to that, you should have at least 3 years of experience in the industry.

...it is important to obtain qualifications before you even start your career in the public relations profession accompanied by professional behaviours (PR 3 - 2021).

Although Hoyles (2011) claims that there is a lack of precise criteria which distinguishes those who claim professional status from other occupations. This sentiment resonates with some of the academic discourses stated earlier in this thesis.

So many people have forced themselves into the profession without formal qualifications, they believe as long as they can speak fluently and write well, they are experts in the field, this is not supposed to be like that (PR 3 -2021).

Participant (PR 4 - 2021) states:

For me the biggest requirement is one should hold is ethics, because you deal with a lot of confidential information and if you do not know how to uphold confidentiality and how to protect the interest of the organisation that you work for, then you are in a wrong profession. The theoretical understanding of the field must be there, so a proper tertiary qualification should be the basic. It should not just be someone straight from high school who understand things and moves apparent and one day becomes a chief of public relations. So, there should be a thorough theoretical understanding of the field coupled with the right qualifications (PR 4 - 2021).

David (2018) observes that in most public sectors, a public relations officer role is not well defined. There should be a distinction between media officer / journalists or information officers and public relations professionals. Although they have pretty much the similar requirements, they do different jobs on a daily basis.

...public relations professionals and journalists have always been mixed up, this is because, in the Namibian context or maybe everywhere else they believe or they think if you can sit in front of the television eventually you can do public relations, which is not the case. The journalism part and public relations part are completely two different functions. Just like marketing, advertising etc., they are all separate functions (PR 5 - 2021).

Public relations require a bachelor's degree and the relevant experience of 3 – 5 years. It requires a strong industry experience especially when operating as a sort of an autonomous unit which is not linked to anything else. A PR professional must be somebody with strong moral views of what needs to be communicated and what not, so that it is done correctly. We have those requirements, they are generic in nature, but I think the catch is in how we apply them. So, if we apply them generally, we might not attract the best, but the norm is that at least one must have the relevant bachelor's degree to enter into the field (PR 6 -2021).

Many of the participants were of the opinion that in order to become professional, an undergraduate degree must be a prerequisite. Added to that, participants indicated that at least a minimum of three (3) years is required for adequate foundation in a quest to turn professional within the public relations profession.

These findings on the prerequisites for the professionalism within the public relations profession resonate with some of the academic discourses stated earlier in this thesis. For instance, one of the key principles of the Excellence Theory is that for public relations to become truly excellent in its role, it must be headed by someone with a background in public relations as well as the necessary experience. The colleagues in the department must also have a degree coupled with a background in PR /Communications (Grunig, 2011).

4.5 Summary

The chapter discussed and interpreted the results of the face-to-face interviews held with public relations practitioners and chief executive officers within the selected corporate organisations. The chapter covered participants understanding of the core functions of PR as well as perception of public relations as a profession and its placement as a function within the organisations. Moreover, this section also revealed how professionals perceive the aspect of accreditation and the required standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations practice in Namibia. Scholars have proposed that in order to attain professional status, the public relations industry must meet criteria that are basic to all professions, such as maintaining a code of ethics, serving the public interest, ensuring that practitioners of the profession possess specialized technical skills, possess a body of esoteric knowledge, provide specialised and standardised education to those who seek to enter the profession, offer a unique service, and establish a robust professional organisation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this research was to explore the perception of public relations as a profession amongst selected corporate organisations in order to add to the body of knowledge. This chapter focuses on the summary of the research findings, makes conclusions based on findings and provides recommendations in line with observations made. The limitations of the research are also discussed in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The summary of findings is presented in line with the objectives of this study. The chapter highlights and discusses a summary of each research objective in order to determine whether the objectives were answered.

5.2.1 To examine the core functions of public relations with selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia

Based on the findings of the study, the research observed that public relations is defined differently by different organisations. However, it is evident that the definitions of public relations provide emphasis on the common purpose of the functions in an organisation. These findings are in line with observations from various scholars regarding the functions of public relations and amongst them, public relations is associated with persuasion, assists the organisation's management in achieving organisational goals, believes in transparency and accountability, building relationships and reputational management, dissemination of information. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of information and stakeholder management as functions of PR. Information management involves also managing communication for both internal and external publics. This view aligns with Grunig's (2008) notion of symmetrical communication. The study also observed that digital media has expanded the roles of PR as they now have to manage communication on the different social media platforms.

5.2.2 To examine how selected corporate organisations construct public relations as a profession in Namibia

The study observed the different perceptions of public relations by participants. It was also evident that how public relations is constructed/perceived depends on each organisational set-up. Different perceptions exist regarding PR including the fact that PR can be performed by anyone without a required or specific qualification. PR is also seen or perceived as a means through which organisations can selectively communicate with their publics. It also emerged from the study that PR practitioners often have to prove their value in environments that often undermine their capabilities. The research also discovered that, in the public sector, different OMAs have their own different structure where to place PR. In some organisations, PR is well represented at management level while in other organisations (public sector), the PR function is not placed at management level. The placement of PR can also be seen as an indicator of how PR is perceived in organisations. This makes it difficult as the profession does not get the support it deserves because certainly it is dealing with wrong people. PR counsels the management and influence change in behaviour. It is a strategic role and a strategic function. Therefore, as Grunig (2008) contends, PR must be integrated with other management functions in order to maximise its value to the organisation.

5.2.3 To establish the required standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations practice in Namibia

The research established that for the public relations to be considered as a credible profession, a degree in PR must be a basic requirement. Accreditation was also mentioned as a major factor to the professionalisation of PR in order to safeguard the interests of the profession. Another finding is an attribute to the fact that there is no local professional body that governs the public relations professions interests. Every public relations professional must belong to a local professional body, and this will give credibility to the profession. The profession needs to be protected. Even though there is PRISA – Namibia Chapter, it is not serving the profession according to the Namibian standard as rules and standards are set by South Africa. This means South Africa determines everything, including programmes and courses and Namibia chapter must comply. Public relations is managing a perception, managing the organisations and the key stakeholders, it's all about ensuring there is flow of communications between the organisations and the intended publics, keeping the channel of dialogue open basically.

5.3 Conclusions Based on the Findings of the Study

Based on the study, the conclusion drawn from the findings revealed that public relations profession is a necessity for any organisation. It is however defined and understood differently in various contexts. The findings also revealed public relations must be a management function and it must be recognised as such in so it can influence and make strategic decisions. Grunig (2014) recommends that PR function should be regarded as a management function, and it exists to council and advice management in crucial matters. Another finding reveals that public relations profession is not perceived correctly and this has affected the reputation of the profession for decades. Lastly, the profession requires a local professional body to safeguard the professions interests. The local regulatory body will also contribute towards accreditation and the credibility of the profession.

5.4 Recommendations Based on the Findings of the Study

Based on the findings from the previous chapter, the study recommends the following: organisations should familiarise themselves with the profession to understand the importance and functions of the profession to the organisation. Public relations professionals should engage in constant training to enable them to fully appreciate the purpose and role of profession.

Namibia should establish their local professional body. A professional body exists to advance a particular profession, support the interests of people working in that profession and serve the public good. The researcher recommends that the MICT should take a lead in establishing the local professional body which will be semi-private for all Namibians. Public relations professionals should come out more in defending the profession, they should be inquisitive and approach management on the important matters especially those affecting the profession.

5.5 Limitations of the Research

The study used interview questions or reports obtained during the data collection from selected participants which may have had partialities and eventually affected the findings. The study looked at an exploration of the perception of public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in

Windhoek, Namibia, and thus these results should not be used to generalise all corporate organisation in Windhoek, Namibia.

5.6. Recommendations for Future Research

The research established that there are only a few studies done with regards to public relations profession, thus the research recommends that more studies on public relations need to be conducted in the future to add to the body of knowledge in Namibia.

5.7 Chapter Conclusion

The study looked at an exploration of the perception of public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia. Based on the findings, the researcher believes that there is a room for improvement in the public relations profession. Public relations is a crucial profession to any organisation as it was emphasised by the participants who took part in the research. It is up to the organisations, both public and private, to take this function very seriously for the future benefits of the profession, and that of the organisations. Public relations professionals in the public service are not in the forefront of communications activities as much as they should be and this some of the participants attributed to how the organisation is set up. The findings further revealed that there is lack of knowledge within the public service management when it comes to the public relations profession, that is why the function is misplaced.

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APPENDIX

ANNEXURE A: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM NUST



FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)

DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: 5020/2020
Student no.: 2012766

Issue Date: 28 July 2020

RESEARCH TOPIC

Title: An exploration of the perceptions of the Public Relations profession among selected Corporate Organisations in Windhoek, Namibia

Researcher: Angela Kachana Ntemwa
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E-mail: angelantemwa1@gmail.com

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E-mail: nmpofu@nust.na

Dear Ms Ntemwa,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to your supervisor or F-REC as applicable in writing. Should there be any uncertainty in this regard, you have to consult with the F-REC.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,



Prof Rweil Makamani
Acting Chairperson: FREC / Associate Dean: Research
and Innovation
Tel: +264 61 207-2688
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Prof Alinah K Segobye
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**Namibia
University of
Science
And Technology**

[Informed Consent Form for {Chief Executive Officers, Directors, Managers and Public Relations Practitioners}

This informed consent form is for; Chief Executive Officers, Directors, Managers and Public Relations Practitioners who will be invited to participate in the research "An Exploration into the perception of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia."

[Name of Principle Investigator] Angela Kachana Ntemwa

[Name of Organization] Namibia University of Science and Technology

[Name of Sponsor] NONE

[Name of Project and Version] An Exploration into the perception of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate) You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent**

Form

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Angela Kachana Ntemwa, working for the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology. I am doing research on " An exploration into the perception of the public relations profession among selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia. I am going to give you a background of my study and invite you to be part of this research. You may take your time in deciding as to whether you want to be part of the research or not and you may talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand, you are welcome to ask questions or ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will take time to explain. If you have questions, you may ask me directly.

Purpose of the research

A profession plays a vital role in the functioning of society. Profession connects people and produces a social hierarchy. A person's self is constructed from social and role identities. On the other hand, perceptions are important to the practice of Public Relations, especially the perceptions of those who engage with it on a regular basis and whose decisions directly affect its practice. The concept of public relations has shown many changes and developments since its first emergence. In every period, public

relations have come up to date with different definitions. We want to learn how CEOs and other Executives in corporate organisation perceive the concept of public relations.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation through interview of about 30 minutes to an hour long.

Participant Selection

You are invited to take part in this research because we feel that being the executive of the organisation and the supervisor of the public relations position you are in a position to explain better how the position plays a role in contributing to meeting the set targets outlined in the strategy of the organisation.

Voluntary Participation

It is entirely up to you whether you would like to participate in this research or not. The choice that you will make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports.

Procedures

A. Provide a brief introduction to the format of the research study.

As a researcher, I will be pleased to learn more about the perception of the public relations profession. We are inviting you to take part in this research project, once you accept, you will be required to sign a consent form.

B.

A researcher or I will sit down with you during the interview in a comfortable place which will be chosen by you. During the interview if you do not feel comfortable to answer to some questions, you may indicate, and the interviewer will move on to the next questions. There will be no one else who will be present except the interviewer during the interview unless you would like to bring someone with you. The whole information recorded will be kept confidential and no one else except you and me will have access to the information documented during the interview. The entire interview will be tape recorded with no name labeled except the title of the research and it will be stored on iCloud. The recorded information will be kept confidential and the only members who will have access to the information will be you, the supervisor(s) and myself. The information will be kept for a year before it will be destroyed.

Duration

The time frame for the research will be 6 months in total. During this time, we will visit you at least 3 times for interview and each interview will last for 30 to 1 hour. You can choose to do the interview in one time and that's all the questions will be answered at once.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or some of the topics may make you uncomfortable. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You are not forced to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking

about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits

In terms of benefit, there will be no direct benefit to you, however, your involvement is likely to provide a clearer understanding of where public relations fits best in the corporate organizations.

Reimbursements

You will not be compensated for taking part in the research. This interview will be done in your comfort zone e.g off ice, home at your most suitable time. If there will be travelling involved, the researcher will travel at his/ her expenses to find you where you are.

Confidentiality

The information that will be collected from you will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and it will be kept private. The information about you will only contain number instead of your name and only the researchers will know what your number is.

Sharing the Results

The know ledge that we get from this research will be s hared with you and your organisation before it is made widely available to the public. Each pa liicipant will receive a summary of the results

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You are not forced to take part in this research, when choosing to participate in the research will not affect your job- or job-related evaluations in any way. You may choose to stop participating at any time during the interview and still your job will not be affected. At the end of the interview, you will be given your remarks and you are welcome to modify or remove any portions of those noted that you do not agree with or those that were not noted currently.

Who to Contact?

If you have questions after we are done with the interview, you may as them or you may ask your questions at a later stage. My contacts details are; Angela Kachana Ntemwa at +264 61 4317005 (w) or +264 81125400 1 (m) or email angelanemwal@gmail.com

Please note that this proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Namibia University of Science and Techno logy Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), which is a committee tasked to make sure that research pa liicipants are protected from harm. You are more than welcome to find out more about the FREC and their contacts are Dr A Peel, telephone: 061 207 2965 or email: apeel@nust.na

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I

consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

¹ A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

ANNEXURE B:

AUTHORIZATION COVER LETTER



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES

Enquiries: Mrs Rauna Kalola
Tel: +264 61 205 3084

Private Bag 13355
Windhoek
16 June 2021

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

RESEARCH TITLE: *AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION AMONG SELECTED CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.*

Dear Ms Ntemwa,

The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources is pleased to accept your request in order to conduct research for the purpose of your studies with an understanding that the data collected is used for this study only and will be kept confidential.

The Ministry therefore grants permission in order to contact an interview with the Public Relations Officer, Mrs Rauna Kalola.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Kalola'.

Mrs Rauna Kalola
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER





REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Tel No: (061) 287 9111
Fax No. (061) 234 296

Private Bag 13338
WINDHOEK

Enquiries: Richard J Hasheela
Tel: 061-2872476

23 February 2021

Ms. Angela Kachana Ntemwa
Tel: +264 61 431 7000 (7005) | c: +264 811 254 001 Windhoek
Email: angelantemwa@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Ntemwa

**RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECT
WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER.**

Your request to conduct academic research within the Office of the Prime Minister titled "An exploration of the perceptions of the Public Relations Profession among selected Corporate Organisations in Windhoek, Namibia", has been approved.

Upon completion of your research you are expected to share the report with the Office. The research must be anonymous to any individual, and must be shared with the Office of the Prime Minister prior to publication.

Yours Sincerely

I-BEN NATANGWE NASHANDI
23/02/2021
I-BEN NATANGWE NASHANDI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Executive Director



(Enquiries: Utaara Hoveka +261-204-5052/0812401919)

25 February 2021

Ms. Angela Kachana Ntemwa
Tel: +264-61-431-7000
Email: angelntemwa@gmail.com

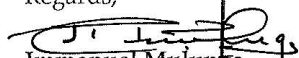
Dear Ms. Ntemwa,

**RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH
PROJECT WITHIN NAMCOR**

Your request to conduct interview NAMCOR official/s for the purposes of your Masters Thesis under the title *"An exploration of the perceptions of the Public Relations Profession among selected Corporate Organisations in Windhoek, Namibia"* is hereby granted.

However, results of your findings must be shared with NAMCOR upon completion of your project. I wish you the best with your studies.

Regards,


Immanuel Mulunga
MANAGING DIRECTOR 03 MAR 2021



National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia
Office of the Managing Director
Private Bag 13196, Windhoek, Namibia

National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia Pty Ltd
1 Aviation Road, Petroleum House,
Private Bag 13196, Windhoek, Namibia.
T +264 61 204 5000 F +264 61 204 5061/30/92 E info@namcor.com.na,
www.namcor.com.na

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Mr. Engelhardt Kongoro / Ms. Florentia Amuenje / Ms. Ndapwilapo Shimutwikeni / Mr. Onni-Ndangi Iithete / Ms. Tersia //Gowases



Alexander Forbes House
 7th Floor, South Block
 23-33 Fidel Castro Street
 Windhoek, Namibia
P. O. Box 16, Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: +264-61-2075111
Fax: +264-61-234021
 contact@ol.na
www.ol.na

2 March 2021

Ms. Angela Ntemwa

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Ms. Ntemwa,

On behalf of the Ohlthaver & List (O&L) Group Executive Leadership, I am pleased to inform you that we have granted you permission to conduct your research of "An Exploration of the Perceptions of the Public Relations Profession among Selected Corporate Organisations in Windhoek, Namibia" under your Supervisor, Dr. Nkosinotando Mpofu.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned at 061 2075207 or email at roux-che.locke@ol.na to assist you with your study.

We wish you all the best in your research.

Sincerely,


 Roux-ché Locke
O&L GROUP MANAGER: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

DIRECTORS: H van Der Westhuizen (Chairman), M Theron (Managing Director), G Hanke, S Thieme, G Shilongo (Alt to S Thieme), B Mukuahima. **Company Secretaries:** Ohlthaver & List Centre (Pty) Ltd. (Reg.No.1583).



INTRODUCING THE O&L PORTFOLIO





09 November 2020

Ms. Angela K. Ntemwa
P.o Box 23452
Windhoek
Namibia

Dear Ms. Ntemwa

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study with the employees of the NCRST

The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology hereby grants you permission to conduct your research with the staff members of the NCRST.

Kindly please note that you will have to strictly adhere to the confidentiality code of the NCRST.

You are welcome to liaise with the Human Resources Unit in order to establish the way forward on how you will go about in terms of your data collections.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms Enid Keramen
Acting Chief Executive Officer



Head Office:

📍 Cnr. Louis Raymond & Grant Webster Street
📞 +264 614317000 🌐 www.ncrst.na

Innovation Hub:

📍 Cnr. Louis Raymond & Grant Webster Street
📞 +264 614317099

Namibia Power Corporation (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 2864, Windhoek, Namibia, NamPower Centre, 15 Luther Street
Tel: +264 61 205 4111
Fax: +264 61 232 805
Email address: register@nampower.com.na
Website address: www.nampower.com.na



29 January 2021

Ms. Angela Ntemwa

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Ms. Ntemwa,

I am pleased to inform you that NamPower has granted you permission to conduct your research of "An Exploration of the Perceptions of the Public Relations Profession among Selected Corporate Organisations in Windhoek, Namibia" under your Supervisor, Dr. Nkosinotando Mpfu. Your request is appreciable and we are ready to support this research.

Please feel free to contact the Marketing and Corporate Communication colleagues on 061 205 2391/2556/2355 or email at register@nampower.com.na to assist you with your study.

We wish you all the best in your research.

Yours Faithfully,


K. S. Haulofu
Managing Director





Private Bag 15008, Katutura, Windhoek
Tel: + 264-61-320 5111, Fax: + 264-61-216 987
www.namcol.edu.na

26 January 2021

Ms Angela Kachana Ntemwa
Po Box 23452
WINDHOEK
Namibia

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT YOUR RESEARCH AT NAMCOL

Your communique received on 26 January 2021 concerning the above subject matter is hereby acknowledged with gratitude.

I have the pleasure to inform you that your request for Ms Angela Kachana Ntemwa (Student No. 2012766) to conduct research on: **AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION AMONG SELECTED CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA** is considered positively.

Ms Ntemwa is requested to submit a copy of her research report to NAMCOL upon completion of her study.

I wish you all the best with your academic career.

Your sincerely,


Dr. H. V. Murangi
Director



TAKING EDUCATION TO THE PEOPLE

Board of Governors:

Mr. Justin Ellis (Chairperson) | Dr. Hertha Pomuti (Deputy Chairperson) | Ms Mahanaim Nghisheefa | Mr. Hofni Ipinge | Mr. Tonata Uwanga |
Ms. Charlotte Keyter | Mr. Kennedy Urikhob | Dr. Heroldt V. Murangi - Chief Executive Officer (CEO) |
Ms Sanet Sleenkamp - Permanent Secretary | Mr. J. Eixab - Company Secretary | Mr. Conny Samaria - Staff Representative

All official correspondence must be addressed to the CEO

ANNEXURE C:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you so very much for agreeing to be part of this research study and for accepting to do face-to-face / online interviews. Kindly try answer the questions as honestly as possible, the information you will give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of the public relations profession among selected corporate organizations in Windhoek Namibia. The following sub-objectives will be addressed.

- To examine the core functions of public relations within selected corporate organisations in Windhoek, Namibia.
- To examine how selected corporate organisations construct public relations as a profession in Namibia.
- To establish the required standards needed for the professionalisation of the public relations practice in Namibia.

Research Objective 1 – with three sub-questions (What are the core functions of the public relations profession?)

- a) What is your understanding of Public Relations?
- b) What informs your thinking about Public Relations?
- c) In your view, what are the core functions of PR in any organisation?

Research Objective 2 – with three sub-questions (How do corporate organisations construct public relations profession in Namibia?)

- a) How do you perceive the public relations profession?
- b) What would you consider to be the benefits of the public relations profession to the organisation?
- c) Where in the organisational structure would you place the public relations position?

Research Objective 3 – with two sub-questions for interviews (To establish the required standards needed for the professionalization of the public relations practice in Namibia)

- a) What is the degree of knowledge and skills required or needed in determining the standards of professionalism in the PR profession?
- b) What is the role of accreditation and licensing in setting the standards of professionalism in public relations?

Thank you for your cooperation.

ANNEXURE D: PLAGIARISM

REPORT

2/4/22, 2:20 PM Feedback Studio

studio feedback studio Ntemwa NTEMWA-...

Match Overview

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ANNEXURE E: LANGUAGE

EDITOR LETTER

4 February 2022


TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I edited and proofread the Master's thesis of Angela Kachana Ntemwa,

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION AMONG SELECTED CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

Any enquiries in this regard can be directed to me.

0818112117

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yanna Smith', written in a cursive style.

Yanna Smith

yannaerasmus@gmail.com