# The Contribution of Public Relations Practice to Organizational Effectiveness: A Case of Private Universities in Rwanda

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**Abstract**
This study aimed to investigate the contribution of Public Relations practice to Organizational Effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda. The study focused on the current execution of public relations activities and how they enhance organizational effectiveness of private universities. The research employed several objectives as to: establish the contribution of public relations communicator roles to organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda; determine the effect of public relations practice models used in enhancing organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda; and establish the influence of public relations hierarchical placement in organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda. The researcher based this study on the Excellence and the Systems Theories of public relations and rational, systems, and strategic constituents modals of organizational effectiveness. This study employed a quantitative approach and a descriptive survey design. Data analysis was done using computer SPSS software. The findings revealed that PR had a high positive influence on organizational effectiveness. However, the nature of practice of PR in private universities in Rwanda did not meet the excellency threshold provided by the Excellency theory and did not adequately play the role described by the systems theory. In addition, the ideal two-way symmetrical model of communication was not satisfactorily applied and, finally, PR was not duly constituted at the strategic level. Thus, study recommends enhancement of PR practice in private universities to the Excellency standards in order to facilitate PR to have a real contribution to effectiveness of the institutions.

**Keywords**
Public Relations Practice, Organizational Effectiveness, Private Universities

## I. Introduction

### A. Background to the study

This research purposed to find out the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda. Every organization, whether for profit or not for profit exists for a purpose and for any organization to keep existing, it has to be effective. The history of studies on Organizational Effectiveness (OE) dates back to authors who wrote on organization. These writers were trying to organize human labour so as to produce the highest output. At first, effectiveness was understood as efficiency and so, the classical School set out to develop universal principles to increase efficiency as a way of realizing effectiveness. Determining effectiveness based on efficiency was on the assumption that organizations had no other objective other than production of goods and services. But that was erroneous since organizations are highly multifunctional units that constantly interact with their environment (Tosun, n.d).
It is until after the Second World War that researchers departed from the efficiency view or OE and turned attention to variables that relate an organization and its environment. This gave OE a new meaning that did not however, discard the efficiency aspect but rather subjugated it as part of the broader meaning. After the Second World War, many models trying to explain what OE is and how it can be determined and achieved rapidly arose. However, the models advanced different points of view and thus the definition of OE still remained difficult to condense into one (Tosun, n.d). Oghojafor, Muo and Aduloju (2012) reckon that Organisational effectiveness is a complex and contentious concept and that no two authorities agree on what constitutes effectiveness or on how it is measured although they all agree that it involves attention to goals, satisfaction of constituents, and relationship with the external environment. Daft (2001) defined organizational effectiveness as the degree to which an organization realizes its goals. The goals may be financial or non-financial.

While there are divergent views on what OE is, and how it can be measured, Oghojafor et. al (2012) opine that still the world is tyrannised by call for effectiveness. Workers, managers, departments and organizations are always asked to be effective and that simply means to produce some form of results. Early management thinkers like Barnard (1964) believe that effectiveness relates to the accomplishment of the cooperative purpose which is social and non-personal in character, insisting that organisations cannot continue to exist without effectiveness and that this effectiveness can easily be measured. Drucker was more emphatic that the society and individuals within it cannot satisfy their needs without effectiveness. In his own words:
Only executive effectiveness can enable this society of ours to harmonise its two needs: the needs of organization to obtain from the individual, the contribution it needs and the need of the individual to have organisation serve as his tool for accomplishing his purposes" (Drucker, 1967).
To capture the construct of OE, it is pertinent to understand the nature of organizations. Different scholars have defined an organization in varied ways. An organisation is a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve common goals (Robbins, 2003). Organisations can also be seen as a system of roles and stream of activities designed to accomplish shared purpose (Robey and Sales, 1994), a definition that emphasises the importance of organisational structure and processes in pursuit of common goals. However they are defined and whatever their peculiarities, all organisations are characterised by coordination of efforts, a common goal, division of labour and a hierarchy of authority (Schein, 1980).

A more interesting view is by Imevbore (2011) that an organisation as an open system that is set up to convert resources into products and services which are then provided to an external receiving system. He sees an organisation as being alive and stresses its need to sustain that life by responding to its internal dynamics and external realities. Imevbore (2011) argues further that the presence of "organ" in organisation suggests the evidence of life and the need for a set of systems and processes to sustain and improve that life. An organisation must therefore be seen not just as a part of the economic system but also as an entity that must receive and give life in order to survive. In this regard, it must be proactive in its response to the internal environment and also respond to external environmental factors, for it to be seen as effective.

The view of an organization as an open system is what invokes the imperative of Public Relations (PR) in enhancing OE. According to Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Public Relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (2015). The imperative for public relations is seemingly widening in many organizations. According to Winston (2015), almost all large organizations either have a public relations department or outsource their public relations needs to a company. Public relations is seen as a vital part of maintaining the organization's image and of communicating its message to its customers, investors and the general public. A positive perception of a company or non-profit organization can increase its sales and improve its bottom line. The functions and key tasks of a public relations specialist can be varied.

Education institutions also exist and are run as organisations and too need to be effective in achieving their goals, mission, and objectives. Private universities in particular should perform optimally in order to remain afloat amidst tightening competition. Private universities in Rwanda, and world over play an important part in ensuring access to education and training for the population of any country. In Rwanda, there has been a proliferation of private universities since the end of the Genocide in 1994. Currently, there are over thirty higher learning private institutions compared to less than five in the period before the Genocide (Higher Education Council, HEC, 2015). In 2009, the government of Rwanda turned to the private sector, including universities to boost university facilities (The New Times, 2009). Private Universities complement the efforts by the state to guarantee training for all citizens given the fact that public universities cannot absorb all numbers due to limited infrastructure. Formally, few people gained admission to public universities resulting in fewer graduate populations in the country. But the establishment of private universities in the country has helped in improving the situation by increasing the graduate population for industry and government. Moreover, private universities are economically and socially contributing to their community, its economy and their own prosperity and quality of life.

In its Higher Education Policy, the Government of Rwanda has set out its roadmap for higher education in Rwanda, specifying the contribution it is expected to make to the economy and society in view of Rwanda's Vision 2020. The challenge for higher education institutions is to develop their strategy for implementing the policy, by providing a graduate labour force with the knowledge and skills needed to drive the socio-economic development of the country, engage in relevant research and meet the needs of businesses and communities for consultancy and other services (HEC, 2009). Despite the fact that private universities in have been mandated by HEC to provide tertiary education and skills training to qualified candidates desiring to avail themselves of tertiary education for skills acquisition and training and overall personal development, they have had their share of challenges to optimally play this role.

Recent trends in a number of private universities in Rwanda have pointed to a number of challenges that derail them from recording optimum effectiveness. One, these universities are grappling with reputation issues due to sections of the public seeing them as an avenue for money making. The perception is extended to include the quality of students they enroll and also the quality of academic and administrative staff they employ. They also grapple with limited and unstable funding that sometimes has led to low and delayed salaries leading to staff shortage and high turnover. Inadequate finances has also led to inability to provide ample facilities in terms of lecture rooms, libraries and ICT labs, as well as supporting professional growth of their academic staff. Private universities have also recorded dwindling numbers in student enrolment (Nyamache, 2009). All these inadequacies have no doubt hampered the optimal performance of private universities. These challenges can partly be confronted by the embracement and right practice of Public Relations.

The questions that these arguments provoke for the present study are whether private universities in Rwanda recognize PR as a management function; and whether they actually incorporate PR in strategic management and acknowledge that performance of an organization can be accredited (at least in part) to the professional role and function of an effective PR unit.

### B. Statement of the Problem

Oghojafor et. al (2012) opine that the world today is tyrannized by call for effectiveness, and workers, managers, departments and organizations are always under pressure to be effective. Studies globally have documented that excellent practice of public relations can greatly enhance the overall effectiveness of an organization. In their Excellence study, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier (2002) suggested that public relations can provide the value to an organization by identifying the strategic publics that develop because of the consequences that organizations and publics have on each other by using symmetrical communication programs to develop and maintain quality relationships with these strategic publics. In spite of this, public relations practitioners have continued to struggle to define the role and place of PR in organisations and its contribution to the organizational performance (L. Grunig et al.2002). If the above submissions are from the west economies where the PR industry is arguably grown, the situation in Africa and specifically in Rwanda where PR as an industry is in its nascent stages calls for an examination. Jjuuko (2014) says PR in Rwanda is in its infancy and even some big institutions neither have PR departments nor a person in charge of public relations. Globally, the vital roles public relations play in educational institutions has been underscored. Grillis (1997) opines that many universities have set up PR units for the purpose of enhancing communication with their publics. In concurring, Hirsh & Weber (1999) claims that universities generally look to public relations units to manage crises, boost rankings, increase donations, and carry out a variety of other tasks. However, Bruning & Ralston (2001) assert that the practice of public relations at most universities has been relegated to a single office concerned primarily with managing institutional reputation. Private universities in Rwanda are faced with performance challenges indicated by dwindling student enrollment, high staff turnover, limited cash flows among others (Nyamache, 2009). With PR practice, even in grown economies still facing an identity crisis, questions abound as to whether PR practice in a developing economy like Rwanda, and in less commercially viewed industry as education, is appreciated and given the eminence it requires to contribute to organizational effectiveness. This study therefore sought to unravel the state of PR practice in private universities in Rwanda and its contribution to organizational effectiveness of the universities.

### C. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda.

#### 1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To establish the effect of public relations communicator roles on organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda.
- To determine the effect of public relations practice models on enhancing organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda.
- To establish the effect of public relations hierarchical placement on organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda.

### D. Research Questions

In the light of the above objectives, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What is the effect of public relations communicator roles on organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda?
- What is the effect of public relations practice models on organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda?
- How does public relations hierarchical placement affect organizational effectiveness in private Universities in Rwanda?

## II. Literature Review

### A. Theoretical Review

‘All who attempt to solve problems, make recommendations and predict the future, need theories, models, and as a starting point, concepts’ (Skyttner, 2001). Theory provides a model for the practice of public relations. This is study was mainly informed by two theories: The Excellency theory and The Systems theory. The study was also framed by three organizational effectiveness modals: the rational goal, the system model, and the strategic constituents model.

#### 1. The Excellence Theory

The excellence theory is the first general theory of public relations (Lindeborg, 1994). The theory specifies how PR makes organizations more effective, how it should be organized and managed in order for it to contribute to organizational effectiveness, and how to determine the monetary value of public relations (Grunig, 2002). The excellence theory first explains the value of PR to an organization and the society in which it operates. This value is based on the quality of relationships an organisation has with its stakeholder publics (Grunig, 2002). The theory asserts that in order for PR to make a contribution in an organisation it must be part of strategic management (Ni, 2006). According to the theory, for an organisation to be effective it must solve the problem and satisfy the goals of both the manager and stakeholders. Organisations must identify their various publics who are affected by the decisions taken by the organization or those who want the organisation to solve a problem important to them.

#### 2. The Systems Theory

The systems theory also offers useful insights to the practice of public relations. Systems theory provides a framework through which to view organisations and their relationships with the environment. It is used to explain how public relations helps understand and manage the relationships an organisation has with its stakeholders and publics who make up its environment. Early systems theory (von Bertalanffy 1968) suggested that an organization and its environment were separated by a boundary through which information and resources flowed. Spanning this boundary was seen as a critical role for public relations professionals, who would provide information to the environment about the organization and bring information about the environment back to the organisational decision makers.

#### 3. Organizational Effectiveness Models

Several models have been developed to capture the richness of the organizational effectiveness construct. The traditional model relies on a vision of the organization as a rational set of arrangements oriented toward the achievement of goals (Goodman et al. 1977). Effectiveness is measured in terms of accomplishment of outcomes (Etzioni 1960). The focus is exclusively on the ends: achievement of goals, objectives, targets, etc.

The system model, while not neglecting the importance of the ends, emphasizes the means needed for the achievement of specific ends in terms of inputs, acquisition of resources and processes (Yuchtman and Seashore 1967). The conception of the organization is grounded in the open system approach whereby the inputs, transformation process and outputs are considered part of a whole and not independent components. The strategic constituents model broadens the scope of the two previous models by adding the expectations of the various powerful interest groups that gravitate around the organization (Connolly, Colon and Deutch 1980). Thus, the organization is perceived as a set of internal and external constituencies that negotiate a complex set of constraints, goals and referents (Goodman et al. 1977). That is, the owners, employees, customers, suppliers, creditors, community and government represent interest groups that must be satisfied in order to ensure the effectiveness and survival of the organization.

### B. Conceptual Framework

The underpinning variables in this research are public relations practice on one hand and organizational effectiveness on the other as both independent and dependent variables respectively. The work of Broom, Dozier, and their colleagues provides the foundation for much of our understanding of public relations roles. In a series of studies, they identified four primary roles as communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving facilitator (Broom 1982; Broom & Smith 1979; Broom & Dozier 1986; Dozier & Broom 1995). There are many ways to measure the effectiveness of an organization.

Borrowing from the different models, organizational effectiveness is indicated by among others: goal attainment, organizational alignment, and relationship with key publics (Friedlander and Pickle, 1967).Based on the elaboration above, the two variables of the study can be conceptualized as below:

**Independent variables** **Dependent variable**

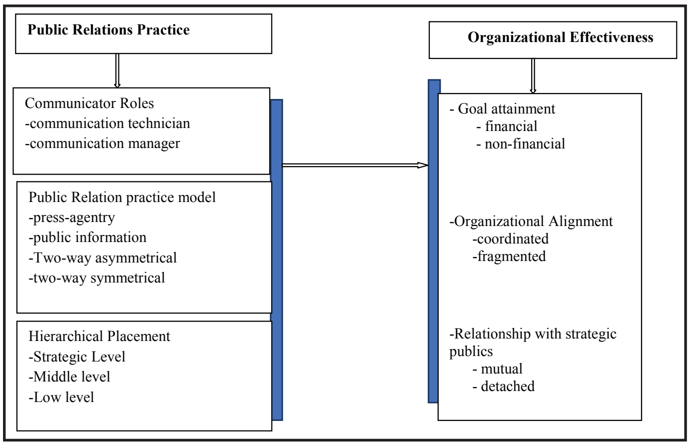


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework: Researcher (2016)

As indicated above, PR practice can contribute to organizational effectiveness in the areas given. If the PR communication roles are performed well, there will be effective planning, crafting and dissemination of information. If the roles are not fully enacted, then there will be a communication gap leading to ineffectiveness in an organization. The roles also enhance alignment of different units in the organization to ensure smooth coordination and thus effectiveness. Also, if the PR practice adopts a symmetrical two-way communication, relationship with crucial publics will be enhanced while the reverse is also true. Goal attainment of an organization will partly depend on the presence of PR at the strategic management level.

### C. Review of Variables

#### 1. Communicator Roles

The concept of roles was brought forward first by Broom & Smith (1979). In their study, they identified four roles enacted by PR practitioners: communication technician, communication facilitator, problem solving facilitator, and expert prescriber. Later, Dozier (1983) argued that the last three roles were similar and he combined them to form the communication manager role.

The communication technician is an entry level role for which the practitioner is hired primarily to write or implement activities and, as such, is not part of the decision-making process (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2006). The communication technician role focuses on the actual production and dissemination of public relations materials (Broom & Smith, 1979). Technician tasks include writing press releases, creating fliers, and updating media lists (Broom & Smith, 1979). The communication manager role amalgamated three roles that were found to be related. Dozier (1983) research on the four original public relations roles by Broom (1979) and found that the roles of communication facilitator, problem solving facilitator, and expert prescriber were highly correlated, but the role of communication technician was not correlated with them. Because of this, Dozier simplified the roles and combined the three to become what is known as the manager role, and the technician role he found to remain separate. Managers are practitioners who are part of decision-making (Dozier, 1992). Managers also use research to inform their strategies (Dozier, 1981, 1986; Judd, 1987) and evaluate their success (Dozier, 1984).

As the name indicates, the role of the communication facilitator is to facilitate communication between an organization and its publics (Broom & Smith, 1979). Originally, "the communication process facilitator," this role acts as the "go-between" or "information mediator" (Broom & Smith, 1979). The expert prescriber is a practitioner who identifies communication problems between an organization and its publics and proposes solutions to those problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). In this role, the practitioner works independently and does not seek input from organization management (Broom & Smith, 1979). The role of problem-solving process facilitator is similar to that of the expert prescriber in that the goal is to identify and solve problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). However, the main difference is that the problem-solving process facilitator works with organization management and collaborates to find where communication problems are and what the best solution is (Broom & Smith, 1979). For example, when doing a service with a client, it is only by involving the client in each step that the consultant can expect the project to remain relevant to clients' need and acceptable in the client system (Broom & Smith, 1979). While practicing this model is more tedious at the time, it generally results in better long-term results for the organization (Broom & Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1992).

Whether using the original four roles, or the two-role dichotomy, no practitioner will fall into a single role at all times (Broom, 2009; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Moss, Newman, & DeSanto, 2005). However, practitioners do tend to have a dominant role they enact most often (Broom, 2009).

#### 2. Models of Public Relations

J. Grunig's research on models of public relations revealed four ways in which public relations was practiced. Huang (1997) noted that "J. Grunig (1984) used Thayer's (1968) concepts of synchronic and diachronic communication to explain 'why some practitioners engage in informative two-way communication and others in one-way manipulative communication'" (p. 18). J. Grunig characterized synchronic communication as asymmetrical where the objective of the practitioner was to change public behavior. He characterized diachronic communication as symmetrical where the objective of the practitioner was to reach a common acceptable view to everyone involved in the communication process. From this observation, J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) posited four models based on two variables—direction and purpose—that reflected how public relations was practiced. Direction referred to the extent the public relations model was based on one-way communication or two-way communication. One-way communication described a simple dissemination process and two-way communication recognized an exchange process. Huang (1997) observed that purpose, on the other hand:

…characterizes whether the model is asymmetrical or symmetrical. Asymmetrical communication is unbalanced; it leaves the organization the way it is and tries to change only the public. Symmetrical communication, however is balanced; it adjusts the relationship between the organization and public. (pp. 18)

First, the publicity model was based on the simple notion that any publicity was good publicity. No publics were identified, no goals were established, and no evaluation occurred. The organization sought to control its environment in this approach. Second, the public information model represented those organizational activities in which practitioners merely disseminate information. Again, little research was involved in the process. However, Huang (1997) noted that the organizational goal of this model was to adapt or cooperate with its environment. Third, the two-way asymmetrical model involved research; however, the research was performed primarily for persuasion goals for the good of the organization. Information was used by organizations to coordinate and direct campaigns to convince publics to think or behave in certain ways. The last approach was the two-way symmetrical model. The primary difference with the two-way asymmetrical approach was the recognition that information can and should flow both to and from the organization to its environment. This model suggested that organizations should be as susceptible to change as stakeholders. Consequently, this perspective is the best normative model.

As a strategy, however, advocates of the two-way symmetrical model argue that it possesses significant utility. Research from the IABC Excellence project support this view (J. Grunig, & L. Grunig, 2000). Before a particular public relations model is employed, professionals use a technique known as environmental scanning that helps them monitor the environment for potential issues that might result in activism.

### 3. Hierarchical Placement

Hierarchical placement refers to the administrative level a particular unit is placed in the organizational structure as top/strategic, middle, or low. Organizations have vertical structures, which reflect hierarchical location, and horizontal structures, which reflect the segmentation of responsibilities within a function or a department. Public relations departments operate alongside others, including marketing, human resources, legal, research and development, and operations. These departments are coordinated by a managerial system that is referred to as the dominant coalition. The dominant coalition comprises a range of representatives from the organization and in some cases, the external environment, who have the power to determine the organisation's mission and goals (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2002). Much of an organization's structure and process is greatly affected by these key decision makers – the dominant coalition.

The empowerment of Public Relations Function involves the senior practitioners in the dominant coalition, managing communication programs strategically and building a direct reporting relationship between the public relations executive and the dominant coalition (Grunig, L. A., et. al., 2002). Grunig furthers that an organization whose public relations function adheres to the empowerment principle can easily balance its needs with that of publics. This function helps organizations to effectively manage issues and minimize crises.

Dominant coalition refers to "the group of senior managers who control the organization" (J. Grunig, 1992a, p. 5). The excellence study maintained that because the dominant coalition makes the organization's key strategic decisions, the senior public relations practitioner should have a seat in top management meetings or at least direct reporting relationships to senior managers (J. Grunig, 1992a). Unless the public relations function is empowered by the dominant coalition and included in the strategic decision making process, it cannot enact its role as a counselor, who helps the organization to consider the issues of the organization's strategic publics (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier, 2002).

### 4. Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational theorist Daft (2001) defined organizational effectiveness as the degree to which an organization realizes its goals. The terms 'performance' and 'effectiveness' are used interchangeably because problems related to their definition, measurement and explanation are virtually identical (March and Sutton 1997).

Organizational effectiveness (OE) has been one of the most extensively researched issues since the early development of organizational theory (Rojas 2000).Even if today there is some agreement that (i) organizational effectiveness requires multiple criteria, (ii) it must consider both means and ends (Robbins 1983), and (iii) the choice of model and criteria should be flexible and appropriate for the context (Cameron 1986), the definition, circumscription and criteria identification of organizational effectiveness remain problematic, and no definitive theories have been put forth. Effectiveness is difficult to define because it means different things to different people depending on perspectives and frames of references. Any definition is a function of who is defining or who is evaluating effectiveness and why he or she is doing so.

Bernard (1938) defines effectiveness as the accomplishment of recognized objectives of cooperative effort and adds for emphasis that the degree of accomplishment is the degree of effectiveness. But these goals are at times difficult to define and measure, inconsistent, seen differently by different organisational members or even used as camouflage for the hidden agenda of the powerful forces within the organizational. Furthermore, Steers (1991) reminds us of the difference between operative goals (what organisations actually do) and official goals (what they claim they do) and that what matters are the operative goals. To address some of these shortcomings Zamuto (1984) adopts a stakeholder approach by defining organisational effectiveness as human judgments about the desirability of the outcomes of organisational performance from the vantage position of the varied constituencies directly and indirectly affected by the organisation. But stakeholders change over time; the preferences of stakeholders change and the society itself also changes.

Thus whichever way effectiveness is defined or measured, it must take these basics into consideration and that is why it is a multi-dimensional affair. Friedlander and Pickle (1967) express this succinctly when they assert that effectiveness criteria must take into account, the profitability of the organisation, the degree to which it satisfies its members and the degree to which it is of value to the larger society. These three perspectives include system maintenance and growth, subsystem fulfillment and environment fulfillment.

Management accounting scholars also agree that OE is crucial for the organization's survival and cannot be ignored by managers that exert pressure on the performance measurement systems and implicitly expand the boundaries of the performance definition and criteria.

### D. Empirical Review

#### 1. Public Relations Practice in Rwanda

There are scanty studies on PR so far conducted in Rwanda. In one study, Jjuuko (2014) observed that PR in Rwanda was in its infancy where even some big institutions did not have PR departments public relations officers while others operated under marketing, commercial departments, human resource or legal affairs departments. She further found out that in Rwanda, most PR activities were exclusively about advertising without paying attention to strategic PR and institutional communication practices such as cooperate communications and responsibility. This she noted kept PR and communications at a rudimentary press agentry level. According to Jjuuko (2014) PR officers in some organizations were deployed as receptionists, and in some organisations they were not allowed to 'directly report' to the Managing director, and that senior managers did not value PR and therefore attached little or no attention to it. This thus debased the importance of PR in the organisations. In other studies on PR in Rwanda (Murangwa, 2009; RSSB, 2014) it was revealed that the roles of practitioners had altered remarkably with some running errands for senior managers while others received guests, served as tea girls/boys or were assigned as drivers.

#### 2. The Excellency Study

While there have been several studies done in relation to the effects of PR on OE, the most popular is the Excellence study. The study primarily sought to find out the value that PR added to organizations and how PR contributed to OE. First, to answer the "effectiveness" question, the Excellence research team identified the four approaches to OE seen early: the goal attainment approach, the systems approach, the strategic constituencies approach, the competing values approach from organizational theory (J. Grunig and Huang, 2000). After identifying four approaches to organizational effectiveness, the Excellence research team conducted both quantitative and qualitative research across several countries and extracted factors contributing to effective public relations (i.e., the answer to the "Excellence" question).

Based on the findings of the Excellence study, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) suggested that the value of public relations is in "relationships" that an organization develops and maintains with strategic publics. This is because organizations become effective when achieving their goals; by means of quality relationships, organization can achieve goals because they choose goals valued by strategic publics (J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Because of quality relationship management between an organization and its publics, effective organizations can select goals valued by publics; consequently, they can achieve their goals because publics support them (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). And, as J. Grunig and Hung (2002) pointed out, "… ineffective organizations cannot achieve their goals, at least in part, because their publics do not support and typically oppose management efforts to achieve what publics consider illegitimate goals" (p. 10). Thus, as J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2001) concluded, for an organization to be effective, it should behave ethically and be socially responsible, which means that an organization engages in "quality relationship management" with its publics. J. Grunig and Repper (1992) suggested that such characteristics of excellent public relations help the public relations function to be effective as well as contribute to overall organizational effectiveness. In summary, the key attributes of excellent public relations include the following practices: 1) identifying "strategic publics" from the environment and 2) practicing a "symmetrical" model of public relations to cultivate quality relationships with these strategic publics (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

#### 3. PR in Higher Educational Institutions

A few other studies have taken on PR practice in higher learning institutions. One study by scholars studying the practice of public relations by universities in the former Soviet-bloc countries (Hall, 2002; Hall & Baker, 2003; Pabich, 2003) emphasized on strategic public relations management. Universities in former Soviet-bloc were facing complex environments. The introduction of capitalism meant that old state-owned universities, which never had to compete, now found themselves losing students to new private universities that offered attractive packages to students (Miroiu, 1998; Neculau, 1997; Stanciulescu, 2002). This competition prompted both state-owned and private universities to seek to utilize public relations as means of getting an edge. In the past, public relations practice at these universities was a mixture of marketing, advertising, and lobbying (Coman, 2003).

Pirozek and Heskova (2003), for example, examined the public relations practice of a university in the Czech Republic. They showed how the two-way symmetrical tactics of research and feedback systems helped the university gain a better understanding of the attitudes of its key publics. Kaverina's (2003) study of a state university in Russia showed how two-way symmetrical efforts to initiate dialogue (e.g. radio call in shows, open house functions) helped strengthen the relationship between the university and its key publics. In other studies of public relations practice in the university setting, Samsup, Brunner, and Hon (2002), for example, examined how practitioners can measure relationships in a university setting. DeSanto and Garner (2001) recommended that university public relations practitioners set synchronized goals, identify stakeholders, and conduct evaluations. Grillis (1997) argued that it is critical for public relations practitioners to have access to the top leaders within a university. Henderson (2001) proposed a four-step process for managing communication in universities: research, planning, communication, and evaluation.

Popular publications aimed at university public relations practitioners have also advocated practices that are similar to the Excellence characteristics. Schoenfeld, Wiemer, and Lang (1997) encouraged practitioners to embrace strategic planning and outcome evaluation. Jarrell (2003) encouraged universities to involve public relations in decision making because practitioners can lessen risk by forging good relations with publics and can scan for emerging issues. Simpson (2002) advised university communicators to build strong community relationships, take local concerns seriously, and attend to internal and external constituencies. Ross and Lindenmann (2002) suggested that practitioners clearly define their goals and measure output, outgrowth, and outcomes. Ross (2004) urged practitioners to utilize external research resources (e.g., consulting firms) to enhance their practice.

In a study in Ghana, Eniola (2011), submitted that notwithstanding the benefits of public relations to higher education, there were conflicting views about its significance to the operations of universities. This is because Public Relations officers responsible for public relations were often left out of decision-making and on several occasions called in to implement some decisions that they hardly understand having not taken part in decision making processes. Eniola (2011) furthers that practitioners were not accorded the status that would make them part of decision making organs. This gives an impression of insignificance of their function as role players in the management of Universities.

The above studies illustrate that organizations are encouraged to integrate PR practices and practitioners in their strategic organs to enhance organizational performance. However, more studies needed to be done to see if management of private universities in Rwanda embraced the PR practice in totality as to have it make a positive contribution to organizational effectiveness.

#### 4. Critique of Existing Literature and Gaps

There has been less research conducted in the area of PR practice and organizational effectiveness. Those focusing on educational institutions are even more scanty. The researcher traced few studies conducted mainly in Northern America and Europe and West Africa but none elsewhere. As such, the studies available are few and far between in time and geography. Many studies done in the practice of public relations such as (J. Grunig & Jaatinen, 1998; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1998; Rhee, 2002) were located in North America and mainly drew information from the corporate context. The findings revealed the pivotal contribution that PR practitioners can have in organizational effectiveness. This studies, however, fail to paint a picture of the situation outside North America and outside the corporate industry.

The few studies done West Africa, Ghana, (Ojumo et al. 2006; Eniola, 2011; National School Public Relations Association, 2010), mainly dwelt on the functions of PR in universities. These studies did not address how specifically PR practice enhances organizational effectiveness in universities. It was therefore imperative that more studies are conducted in other regions including Rwanda, to specifically unearth the link between PR practice and OE in universities.

From the existing literature in the area of public relations practice in universities, glaring gaps that need to be studied emerge. One, no study has be conducted in Rwanda about PR practice in higher institutions of learning, so there was need for a research to fill that gap. Secondly, no study has been done in Rwanda in any industry to specifically address how PR practice contributes to Organisational Effectiveness, and this study would too fill the void. Secondly, similar studies done elsewhere had dwelt on the functions of PR practice in educational settings as opposed to examining the influence the practice has on OE.

## III. Methodology

### A. Research Design

The study employed a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative. Using a descriptive design, the study relied on survey and in depth interview to collect relevant data. A survey was preferred because through the completion of structured questions, it takes a relatively short time frame, and is quantifiable and generalizable to an entire population if the population is sampled correctly. Babbie (1989) says that surveys can be used for descriptive, exploratory and explanatory purposes. In depth interview was used to get information from respondents considered Key Informants. An in-depth interview is an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in which much more information can be obtained (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

### B. Study Population

The study population was employees, lecturers and management, of private universities in Rwanda. The researcher conveniently selected private universities based in Kigali City which are nine in number (source HEC, 2015) This is because most private universities in Rwanda are based in Kigali. This would also enhance homogeneity among survey respondents as established by Bromley (1993). The target population for the study was top strategic managers, PR heads, and representatives of the teaching staff.

### C. Sampling Frame-work

The study researcher selected three participants they representing key constituents in the universities from each of the nine selected universities. This formed a study frame of twenty-seven participants as follows:

Table 1: Population Frame Work

| | Vice chancellor | Public Relations Head | Teaching Staff representative | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University A | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University B | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University C | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University D | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University E | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University F | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University G | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University H | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| University I | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| **Total** | **9** | **9** | **9** | **27** |

Source: Researcher

Public relations officers were selected because they are the ones that actually do the practice and therefore have detailed information on the practice of public relations in their institutions. The top most manager, the VC was targeted because they are dimmed to be the role givers. A staff representative was targeted to give views from a publics perspective to highlight how PR practice serves key constituents.

### D. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Given the small size of the sample frame, the researcher used all the twenty-seven respondents thus the sample size was twenty-seven respondents picked using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was preferred because it could give the researcher liberty to pick participants with relevant data. In universities where the position of staff representative did not exist, the researcher purposively selected the longest serving lecturer as identified from the human resource office.

### E. Data Collection Instruments

This study employed survey and in depth interview methods of data collection using a questionnaire and interview guide respectively as tools. These methods were appropriate because interviews would allow face to face interaction with key respondents and could fetch additional in-depth information, especially given the small sample size, and questionnaires would enable quick collection of quantitative data. The interview guide was used for key informants in this case purposively picked public relations officers who were six in total. The questionnaires were both structured and unstructured to yield quantitative and qualitative data.

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### F. Data Collection Procedure

Data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were distributed to the specific respondents. In cases where the preferred respondent was not available especially the VCs, the researcher asked for the next available senior manager. The questionnaires were collected within two days of distribution. The interview guide was constructed after the questionnaire so that it could fetch more information on key issues arising from the responses in the questionnaire. The public relations officers were interviewed in their offices. Prior to each interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their consent was sought. Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes. Their responses were recorded down verbatim on templates prepared for each question. Secondary sources comprised published sources, books, journals, and online information and organizational records.

### G. Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis was based on the techniques outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) who argued that qualitative data analysis should consist of three stages: Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, short summaries and field notes were written to highlight important recurring themes, and patterns. Recurring patterns were identified by going through the responses severally. The quantitative data from questionnaires was edited and coded. They were checked for completeness and accuracy and inconsistencies which were genuine were cleared. The aim of coding was to classify the responses into meaningful categories so as to bring out a pattern. After coding, the data was transferred to computer files for processing using SPSS software. Data was presented descriptively in a summarized fashion using descriptive and inferential statistics using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Correlation and Regression analysis were used to establish the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The results were presented in the form of tables which helped in describing data and drawing conclusions (Linda, 2002).

## IV. Results Analysis and Conclusions

### A. Introduction

In this section the researcher presents findings and discussions on public relation practices as an independent variable and organizational Effectiveness as dependent variable. The chapter also presents the relationship between the two variables to unearth the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness.

### B. The Contribution of Public Relations Practice to Organizational Effectiveness

To unearth the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness, the researcher first established the current level of effectiveness in universities by analyzing the three variables of OE: goal attainment level, organizational alignment level, and relationship with key publics level. The results are discussed below.

#### 1. Level of Organizational Effectiveness in Private Universities in Rwanda

To analyse the level of effectiveness in private universities, three variables drawn from OE modals of rational, system, and strategic publics modals were analyzed. The indicators used were goal attainment, Organizational alignment, and relationship with key publics.

#### (i). Level of Goal Attainment in Private Universities

To analyse this variable five items were used and findings are summarized in the Table 2

Table 2: Level Goal Attainment

| Assertions | Mean | Comments | Std. Dev | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Realizing set goals | 2.88 | Moderate | 1.33 | Heterogeneity |
| Realizing set goals within set time limit | 3.40 | Moderate | 1.27 | Heterogeneity |
| Achieving set goals satisfactorily | 3.11 | Moderate | 1.33 | Heterogeneity |
| Readjusting set goals to suit changing conditions | 2.85 | Moderate | 1.35 | Heterogeneity |
| Evaluating goals achieved | 1.66 | Very low | 0.91 | Heterogeneity |
| Polled mean | 2.78 | Moderate | 1.24 | Heterogeneity |

Legend: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from Table 2 show that universities realized their set goals at a moderate level with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 2.88, \overline{S} = 1.33$. Realization of goals set goals within set time limit was at a moderate level with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 3.4, \overline{S} = 1.27$. The rate of satisfaction of how the set goals were achieved was at a moderate level with the mean $\overline{X} = 3.11, \overline{S} = 1.33$. How universities readjusted set goals to suit changing conditions was at a moderate level shown by the mean and standard deviation of $\overline{X} = 2.85, \overline{S} = 1.35$. The culture of evaluating goals achieved was dismally shown at a very low level with a mean of $\overline{X} = 1.66, \overline{S} = 0.91$. Generally, level of goal attainment was moderate with the mean and standard deviation of $\overline{X} = 2.78, \overline{S} = 1.24$.

These findings mean that universities, while not performing poorly, were also not at their best, going by how they performed in attaining their goals. This means that their very existence was threatened if the performance slipped below the average.

#### (ii). Level of Organizational Alignment in Private Universities

This variable was meant to assess how well different managerial units worked together to foster organizational goal achievement. To analyse this sub variable of organizational effectiveness, the researcher used five items to rate the appreciation of the respondents. Findings are summarized in that Table 3.

Table 3: Level of Organizational Alignment

| Assertions | Mean | Comments | Std. Dev | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employees share understanding about organizational goals, vision and direction | 2.92 | Moderate level | 1.38 | Heterogeneity |
| Different departments work together to achieve overall objectives | 2.44 | Low level | 1.33 | Heterogeneity |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Management work with employees harmoniously | 3.11 | Moderate level | 1.45 | Heterogeneity |
| Employees' competencies are aligned to fit the needs of the institution | 3.00 | Moderate level | 1.46 | Heterogeneity |
| Interdepartmental communication is effective | 3.51 | High level | 1.28 | Heterogeneity |
| Polled mean | 2.99 | Moderate level | 1.38 | Heterogeneity |

Key: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from Table 3 showed that all aspects of system alignment were moderately performed except the working together of different departments to achieve overall objectives, which was rated at a low level with the mean and standard deviation of $\overline{X} = 2.44, \overline{S} = 1.33$. Results indicate that employees moderately shared understanding about organizational goals, vision and direction at a mean and standard deviation equaling to $\overline{X} = 2.92, \overline{S} = 1.38$. How management worked with employees harmoniously was at a moderate level with the mean $\overline{X} = 63.11, \overline{S} = 1.45$. How employees' competencies are aligned to fit the needs of the institution scored high shown by the mean and standard deviation equal to ($\overline{X} = 3.00, \overline{S} = 1.46$) . Interdepartmental communication was effective at a high level with the mean equals to ($\overline{X} = 3.51, \overline{S} = 1.28$). The general level of Organizational alignment was moderate with the mean and standard deviation of $\overline{X} = 2.99, \overline{S} = 1.38$.

**(iii). Level of Relationship with Strategic Publics in Private Universities in Rwanda**

To analyse this variable, the researcher asked the respondents to give their appreciation using five assertions. Findings are summarised in the Table 4.

Table 4: Level of Relationship With Strategic Publics

| Assertions | Mean | Comments | Std. Dev | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Continually identifying groups that are important to it | 3.29 | Moderate level | 1.40 | Heterogeneity |
| Engaging key publics before taking any decision that affects the publics | 2.77 | Moderate level | 1.36 | Heterogeneity |
| Making decisions that benefit both university and other interest groups | 4.11 | High level | 2.92 | Heterogeneity |
| Creating sufficient two-way communication channels for all main interest groups | 2.44 | Low level | 1.39 | Heterogeneity |
| Conducts formal research among the main publics | 2.59 | Low level | 1.39 | Heterogeneity |
| Polled mean | 3.04 | Moderate | 1.69 | Heterogeneity |

Key: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from the above table show that the relationship between universities and their strategic constituents was moderate. Universities' continual identification of groups that are important to it was enacted moderately $\overline{X} = 3.29, \overline{S} = 1.40$. This means that at some point, the institutions may fail to notice some strategic publics that emerge in due course, or continue treating as strategic groups that have lost significance. Scholars have emphasized the need for organizations to audit their publics to determine if there are new entrants or arrivals so as to relate with them accordingly. The findings also indicate that key publics were engaged moderately at $\overline{X} = 2.77, \overline{S} = 1.36$ before any decision that affected the publics were taken. Thus, making decisions that benefit both university and other interest groups was at a high level with the mean $\overline{X} = 4.11, \overline{S} = 2.29$. However, questions arise because two key elements for sustaining publics, creating sufficient two-way communication channels for all main interest groups, and conducting formal research among the main publics, were both performed at a low level shown by the mean and standard deviation $\overline{X} = 2.44, \overline{S} = 1.39$ and $\overline{X} = 2.59, \overline{S} = 1.9$ respectively. This may mean that decisions taken assumedly in the interest of the publics, were based on scanty information and imagination of the universities. This explains well the equally moderate performance in goal attain explained in Table 4.10 above. The general level of Relationship with key publics was moderate with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 3.04, \overline{S} = 1.69$. Strategic publics are important for any organization and a relationship other than excellent is detrimental (J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Taking into account the polled means of the three variables of OE: goal attainment (2.78), organizational alignment (2.99), and relationship with key publics (3.04), the general level of OE in private universities in Rwanda is average at a mean of 2.94. This is not a good level of OE for private institutions that are self-funded and are in constant competition. Thus, management of these universities needs to improve this level.

**2. The Contribution of Communicator Roles to Organisational Effectiveness in Private Universities**

To establish how communicator roles of PR practice contributes to OE, the researcher first analyzed how the different types of communicator roles of communication technician and communication manager were enacted by PR officers in the universities.

**(i). Communicator Roles Enacted in Private Universities**

To analyse this variable, the researcher used five items that described the two main communicator roles of communication technician and communication manager(communication facilitator, problem solving facilitator, and expert prescriber)as established by scholars (Broom& Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1983). Findings are summarized in the Table 5.

Table 5: Communicator Roles Enacted

| Assertions | Mean | comments | Std. Dev | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drafting, editing, sending publicity messages like ads as directed by management | 4.48 | Very high level | 0.70 | Heterogeneity |
| Planning events like picnics, graduation and others | 3.51 | High level | 1.12 | Heterogeneity |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coordinating communication flow between university and other publics | 2.81 | moderate | 1.30 | Heterogeneity |
| Working with other managers to find problems and solutions affecting publics | 2.77 | Moderate | 1.39 | Heterogeneity |
| Independently researches to find problems and solutions and advise management | 2.00 | Low level | 0.83 | Heterogeneity |
| Polled mean | 3.11 | Moderate level | 1.07 | Heterogeneity |

Key: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from Table 5 showed that drafting, editing, sending publicity messages like ads as directed by management is applied at a very high level because the mean of this assertion was $\bar{X}=2.44, \bar{S}=1.33$(X=4.48;=0.07). The value of the standard deviation showed that the data was heterogeneous. Planning events like picnics, graduation and others was done at a high level with a mean and standard deviation equal to(X=3.51,=1.12). All these activities are typical of the basic technician role. This implies that PR in many universities is primarily hired to conduct these basic functions.

The rest of the roles fall under the broad advanced role of communication manager. Coordinating communication flow between university and other publics, activities that describe a communication facilitator role was enacted at a moderate level with the mean $\bar{X}=2.81, \bar{S}=1.30$. Working with other managers to find problems and solutions affecting publics, that describes the problem-solving facilitator role was applied at a moderate level shown by the mean of $\bar{X}=2.77, \bar{S}=1.39$. The last managerial role, the expert prescriber described by independently researching to find problems and solutions and advising management was practiced at a low level with the mean equals to $\bar{X}=2.00, \bar{S}=0.83$ The general level of Communicator Roles practices is moderate with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\bar{X}=3.11, \bar{S}=1.07$.

It is worth noting that the level of enactment of roles reduces significantly from basic roles to advanced roles. This implies that PR practice in universities has not been given green light to enact the more advanced functions. This finding corroborates other studies that noted that PR officers are assigned basic and sometimes irrelevant roles (Murangwa, 2009). One practitioner captured it better: "Sometimes you feel you can do much with what you know but you are not just given the platform so you end up doing some secretarial kind of work," said a respondent in university E. Another practitioner from university A claimed that even the writing and dissemination of messages is usurped from them. He said, "other department heads and top managers many times write directly to their audiences or through their secretaries and many times you see an announcement, or memo from a big office that is poorly written in language and structure and you wonder." This was in line with an assertion from one other respondent in University B who said once a VC wrote a warning message to both students and staff on the same memo. "If he had tasked me to communicate this, I would have done better." He said. The lack of PR enacting advance communication manager role is therefore a big obstacle toward realizing the full potential of communicator roles in institutions.

### (ii). The Contribution of Communicator Roles to organizational effectiveness

To analyse the contribution of public Relations practices to organizational effectiveness inferential statistics specifically correlation analysis and coefficient of determination were used as recommended by (Linda, 2002). Findings are summarized in the Table 6.

Table 6: Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between Communicator Roles and organizational effectiveness

| | | | Communi-cator Roles | organizational effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Communicator Roles | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .986** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| | organizational effectiveness | Correlation Coefficient | .986** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| Coefficient of determination | | $(.986)^2=0.972$ or 97.2% | | |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finding showed that Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was 0.986 with the p-value equaling to 0.000. According to Linda (2002), when rho is 1 there is Perfect linear correlation, when 0.9< rho<1 there is a strong correlation, when 0.7< rho<0.9, there is a high correlation, when 0.5< rho<0.7, there is a moderate correlation, when 0< rho<0.5, there is a weak correlation, when rho =0, there is no relationship between the variables. Linda further said that when the p-value is less than the level of significance, the relationship between variables is significant.

For this case the value of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was between 9 and 1. The researcher found that there was a strong correlation between Communicator Role practices and Organizational Effectiveness. The relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than the level of significance (0.01). The coefficient of determination showed that Communicator Roles practices contributed 97.2% to the Organizational Effectiveness.

This finding are well in line with the finding of Pirozek and Heskova (2003), and Kaverina (2003) who established that the when PR officer assume communication managerial roles, they help organization be proactive in identifying and managing issues thus enhancing effectiveness.

## 3. The Effect of PR Models Used in OE in Universities in Rwanda

To establish how PR models used influence OE, the researcher first determined which PR model/s were used by PR departments in the universities.

### (i). PR modals Used in Private Universities

To determine the PR modal/s used, five items that describe press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models were used and the results are summarized in the table below.

Table 7: PR Models Used

| Assertions | Mean | Comments | Std. Dev. | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University sends positive messages like its achievements to the public to enhance its brand | 3.48 | High level | 1.22 | Heterogeneity |
| University studies public perception of it and sends messages geared toward changing the perceptions the public has about the university | 3.48 | High level | 1.22 | Heterogeneity |
| Universityviews of its publics and adjusts to accommodate such views. | 3.37 | Moderate level | 1.36 | Heterogeneity |
| University conducts research to know views of different publics | 2.59 | Low level | 1.27 | Heterogeneity |
| University sets clear objectives of its messages and evaluates impact of its communication activities | 2.59 | Low level | 1.33 | Heterogeneity |
| **Polled mean** | **3.10** | **Moderate level** | **1.28** | **Heterogeneity** |

Legend: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from table 4.6 indicate that activities typical of press agentry model and public information model (university sends positive messages about its achievements to the public to enhance its brand) were dominant at a high level with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 3.48, \overline{S} = 1.22$. The two-way asymmetrical model where an organization embraces dialogue but uses information received to initiate change on the publics is characterized by university studying public perception of it and sending messages geared toward changing those perceptions was equally dominant at a high level with a mean of $\overline{X} = 3.48, \overline{S} = 1.22$ .This intense deployment of more outward looking than inward looking models signifies the universities as organizations were not undertaking a balanced communication with their publics.

The findings highlighted a moderate level $\overline{X} = 3.37, \overline{S} = 1.36$ of the ideal two-way symmetrical model described as: university listens to views of its publics and adjusts to accommodate such views. While the moderate use of this model is laudable, the findings indicated that the means of obtaining views of the publics were not of best practices. That formal research was used to know views of the public pulled a low rating of $\overline{X} = 2.59, \overline{S} = 1.27$ . Another aspect of the two-way symmetrical model (university sets clear objectives of its messages and evaluates impact of its communication activities) was at a low level with the mean equaling to $\overline{X} = 2.59, \overline{S} = 1.33$. The general level of PR models use is moderate with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 3.10, \overline{S} = 1.28$.

Lack of formal research was also reflected in interviews with key respondents when asked how they obtain information. 'Research? mmm..no, we just capture this informally through conversations and may be media.' said a respondent from university I.

These findings contradict J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) who presented the four models of public relations and argued that the ideal model is the two-way symmetrical that involves flow of information out of and into an organization with the organization also willing to adjust to meet publics' expectations. A low level use of this model shows PR practice is not at its best.

### (ii). The Contribution of PR model to Organizational Effectiveness

The Table below indicates how influential use of PR models is in OE.

Table 8: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient Between PR Models and Organizational Effectiveness

| | | | PR model | organizational effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | PR model | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .993** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| | organizational effectiveness | Correlation Coefficient | .993** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| Coefficient of determination | | (.993)2 =0.986 or 98.6% | | |

Finding showed that Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was 0.993 with the p-value of 0.000.As the value of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was between 9 and 1 the researcher ascertained that there was a strong correlation between PR modelpractices and Organizational Effectiveness. The relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than the level of significance (0.01). The coefficient of determination showed that PR model practices contributed 98.6.2% to the Organizational Effectiveness.

This finding echoed finding by Pirozek and Heskova (2003) that the two-way symmetrical tactics of research and feedback systems helped a university gain a better understanding of the attitudes of its key publics.

## 4. Influence of Hierarchical Placement of Public Relations on Organisational Effectiveness in Private Universities

This variable set to find out if PR practice in universities was empowered as to contribute at the top management level. The researcher began by ascertaining the nature of the strategic representation in the universities.

### (i). Nature of Hierarchical Placement of Public Relations in Private Universities

Five assertions were used to ascertain where PR was placed in the managerial hierarchy of private universities. Findings are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Level of Strategic Representation

| Assertions | Mean | Comments | Std. Dev | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The PR head is among top managers, attends, management meetings and takes part in making important decisions | 2.1852 | Low | 1.17791 | Heterogeneity |
| The PR head reports directly to the VC's office | 2.66 | Moderate | 1.38 | Heterogeneity |
| The PR unit established separately from marketing with sufficient resources | 2.14 | low | 1.02 | Heterogeneity |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PR head freely makes important decisions and plans about the PR department | 2.07 | low | 1.20 | Heterogeneity |
| PR department conducts formal research to understand the organization publics | 2.48 | low | 1.28 | Heterogeneity |
| Polled mean | 2.31 | Low | 1.21 | Heterogeneity |

Legend: 1-1.8= Very low; 1.8-2.6= Low level; 2.6-3.4 Moderate level; 3.4-4.2= High level; 4.2-5= very high level

Findings from Table 9 shows that the consideration PR head is among top managers, attends, management meetings and takes part in making important decisions at a low level with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 2.18, \overline{S} = 1.17$. The PR head reports directly to the VC's office at a moderate level with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 2.66, \overline{S} = 1.38$. The PR unit established separately from marketing with sufficient resources at a low level with the mean $\overline{X} = 2.14, \overline{S} = 1.02$. PR head freely makes important decisions and plans about the PR department at a low level shown by the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 2.07, \overline{S} = 1.20$ PR department conducts formal research to understand the organization publics at a low level with the mean equals to $\overline{X} = 2.48, \overline{S} = 1.28$. The general level of Strategic representation is low with the mean and standard deviation equal to $\overline{X} = 2.31, \overline{S} = 1.21$.

These findings reveal that PR heads are not fully embraced into the top strategic management team. In interviews, practitioners revealed that even when they were included in the top management team, their inputs were not genuinely sought. "We are put their to validate and implement what has been brought from above, may be from the board or owners," observed a participant from University G. This is contrary to what scholars such as Rawjee, Veerasamy and Gqamane (2012) who note that organisations need to recognize the value of placing public relations at the boardroom table as strategic business partner and critical part of business planning and operations. Lack of admission of PR heads to the boardroom as revealed in this research is a huge impediment that calls for urgent correction.

### (ii). The Contribution of PR Strategic Representation to Organizational Effectiveness

To unearth the contribution of PR strategic representation to OE, Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was used as indicated in the table below.

Table 10: Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient Between Representation and Organizational Effectiveness

| | | | Strategic represen-tation | organizational effectiveness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Strategic Representation | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .986** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| | Organizational effectiveness | Correlation Coefficient | .986** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 27 | 27 |
| Coefficient of determination | | (.986)2 =0.986 or 98.6% | | |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finding from Table 10 showed that Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was 0.986 with the p-value equals to 0.000. As this value was between 9 and 1, the researcher noted that, according to Linda (2002), there was a strong correlation between strategicRepresentationand organizational Effectiveness. The relationship was significant because the p-value (0.000) was less than the level of significance (0.01). The coefficient of determination showed that strategic Representationcontributed 98.6.2% to the Organizational Effectiveness.

This corroborated with studies by Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) who found out that inclusion at the strategic level of PR CEOs in organization not only improved sound decision making but also enhanced implementation of decision made.

## V. Conclusions

### A. Introduction

This section presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study "Contribution of Public Relations Practice on Organizational Effectiveness in Private Universities in Rwanda.

### B. Summary

The study set out to investigate the contribution of Public Relations practice on Organizational Effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda. The study was motivated by the researcher's realization that the study of if and how PR practice enhances organizational effectiveness had not been well researched especially in the Rwandan context and in educational institutions to be specific. The researcher wanted to find out if the increased setting up of communication units in universities contributed in any way to the performance of the institutions. Thus, the study gauged the practice of PR in private universities in Rwanda against the Excellency theory best practices and the level of organizational effectiveness against the indicators provided by the models.

This study employed a qualitative and quantitative approach and a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey was preferred because it could provide quantitative data that could be easy to analyse and generalize to similar populations. Qualitative data was sought to help shed more light through in depth interview of key informants and open ended questions. The main instruments were questionnaires and interview guide.

### C. Conclusions

Generally, PR practice in private universities in Rwanda is averagely implemented when determined against the Excellency theory standards. The following conclusions can be drawn for the findings.

#### 1. The Contribution of Communicator Roles to OE in Private Universities

The advanced roles of communication manager, communication facilitator, problem solving facilitator, and expert prescriber are not optimally performed with the latter dismal at very low level. PR officers were largely limited to performing basic roles of technician. Despite that, the roles still contributed immensely to effectiveness of the universities.

### 2. The Effect of PR Models Used on OE in Private Universities

The manner in which PR disseminates and collects information subtly affected OE. The ideal two-way symmetrical communication model is not widely practiced. The communication channels used do not have ample feedback mechanisms to enable exchange of information. Formal research initiatives to establish publics views were hardly conducted.

### 3. The Influence of PR Strategic Representation on OE in Private Universities

There is a moderate inclusion of PR heads at strategic management level but this has not necessarily meant that they are contributing much to strategic decisions because their input is no duly sought.

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