

Public Relations Practitioners Leadership Skills as Determinants of Effective Communication in Organizations: Setting the Agenda with Evidence from South-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was conducted for the purpose of investigating Public Relations Practitioners Leadership Skills as determinants of effective communication in organization evidence from south-east, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, we adopted both descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the two research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses. We gleaned primary data from a sample of 100 respondents Public Relations Practitioners from the five states in the region using both quota and systematic random sampling techniques. After distribution of questionnaire, 94% were successfully returned and were used for the final analysis. The findings revealed among others that, the ways public relations practitioners skills can determine effective communication in an organization in south-east, Nigeria include; assisting in producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient organizational leaders, encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in employees; helping employees fit into the social life of community and society at large to achieve organizational goals, helping to enhance employees commitment to organizational goals providing employees with the intellectual and professional knowledge in carrying out their assignments; and helping to make employees adaptable to changing situations. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: Public Relations Practitioners, Leadership Skills, Effectiveness, Communication.

Introduction

Public Relations (PR) today is a complex profession practiced by multitudes around the world, while some PR professionals are employed by a single organization, others work in PR firms with multiple organizations as clients (Sule, 2023). In all Public relations practitioners work in diverse organizations like, government agencies, professional and

trade associations, nonprofit charities, colleges and universities, hospitals, as well as many other forms of for business outfits (Olaoluwa et al, 2022). Practitioners of PR are becoming strategic counselors who are less preoccupied with publicity in the mass media as PR is becoming a management function rather than only a technical communication function (Arabo, 2022; Chiakaan & Bamigboye, 2024). According to Chen et al (2022), PR practices has increasingly grown to become a renowned profession with a scholarly body of knowledge with practitioners devoting most of their efforts to communicating through the mass media (Ude-Akpeh et al, 2019; Nnabuko, 2022). Interestingly, organizations that employ public relations practitioners also have believed that they could get massive numbers of people to behave in ways the organization wanted by creating "image" in the media (Grunig, 2001). This is owing to the fact that Public relations practitioners are most likely to help members of publics construct positive images about organization with adequate and proper counseling that shapes an organization into the desires of people outside the organization. In other words, sophisticated public relations practitioners now understand that they must serve the interest of people affected by organization if they also to serve the interest of the organization they represent. PR communication must be factual and issue base to be able to assuage the hunger and thirst of the target publics, Nwanmuoh et al (2024).

In helping an organization build good relationships with publics, the public relations department achieves a dual objective of adding value to society as well as to their organization. This blends with organizations practice of social responsibility which entails taking the interest of publics into account as well as their self-interest of such organization (Uduji et al, 2018, 2019, 2022; Nwanmuoh & Udu, 2023). An organization that ignores or opposes the interest of publics is indirectly engineering publics activists and groups into conflicts with such organization. This is where the need for the employment of public relations practitioners into an organization becomes imperative. A good PR practitioner is a good leader who manages the concerns of both the organization and the public.

Leadership is of huge importance in management and organization because of its far-reaching effect on the accomplishment of organizational goals (Olaoluwa, 2021; Akinwalere & Oyeniran, 2021). In order words, to produce an effective organization with excellent achievement, there is the need for effective and excellent leadership for effective administration and quality service delivery (Chiakaan et al, 2021). This implies that, every organization needs an effective leader to achieve its goals and achievement of goals requires an effective and efficient communication which must be in the toolkit of a public relations professional. Effective leadership in any organization helps in doing things the right way and also at the right time (Okafor & Nwatu, 2018; Okoi & Okon, 2018). Leaders set direction, build an inspiring vision and create something new for the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Leadership is all about working as a team to create dynamic, exciting and inspiring programmes for organizational competitiveness (Ukala, Nwabueze & Maumere-Obike, 2017). Several studies, Olatunji (2014), Onabajo (2005), Okafor & Nwatu (2018) Okoi & Okon (2018), Ude-Akpeh et al (2019), Ezeah, and Ogbonna

(2022) have shown that PR practitioners are endowed with abundance of leadership skills and are trained to turn around the fortunes of varied organizations if such organization will adhere the PR practices that will be prescribed.

Unfortunately, many organizations in Nigeria are still battling with the reason why the service of a professional public relations is need in an organisation. This attitude simply leads to ineffective utilization of public relations professional resulting in poor communication, to both the internal and external publics of the organization. This according to studies (Umaru & Arabo 2022; Awosemusi & Awofadeju, 2023)) has presented a challenge to most organizations and at times becomes a constraint in the achievement of organizational goals. Currently, unemployment, underemployment and other labour vices have assumed a frightening dimension in Nigeria, yet, every effort undertaken by the Nigerian government to promote public relations practitioners use among various organizations appears not to have yielded the desired results. To Alikor & Amadi (2021), Ezeah and Ogbonna (2022), Nwanmuoh et al (2024), many organizations that have engaged the services of PR professionals seem not to have reaped the benefits, hence, the doubt if PR practitioners' leadership skills has determinants effect on effective communication in organizations and if such communication has any impact on productivity of the organisation. However, while some scholars (Adama & Okechukwu, 2019, Chukwu, Akpor & Wilfred, 2021) wave out the doubt and opined that poor relationship culture in an organization may lead to misunderstanding in the organizational environment and no good rapport between public relations practitioners and other employees, others, (Uduji et al, 2023b; Awosemusi & Awofadeju, 2023) still pointed out that if the policies of the organization are harsh, the work attitude become hostile and unconducive. In all, effective public relations communication skills are so essential simply because ineffective communication in a team leads to team members' feelings of being unwanted, unappreciated, misunderstood, frustrated, hostile and distressed.

It is on the basis of this doubt that this study was designed to assess the public relations practitioners' leadership skills for the effective communication in organizations with emphasis in South-East, Nigeria.

Thus, this paper contributes to the public relations practitioners' leadership skills for the effective communication debate by assessing the empirical evidence from South-East, Nigeria perspective in two areas that have received much attention in the literature:

1. Ascertain how public relations practitioner communication skills can determine effective management of organizations.
2. Determine how public relations practitioner's skills can improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria.

Study Hypotheses

Public relations practitioners serve society by working with publics to manage and if possible, resolve any conflict that may tear societies. The professionals are experts in using communication to build relationships, an organisation without proper public relations

department is bound to lose the ability to build relationships with its social environment as well as with its economic environment. However, leadership skills of PR practitioner are very crucial in communication and management of both internal and external publics of any organisation. Leadership is of huge importance in management of an organization because of its far-reaching effect on the accomplishment of organizational goals.

Leadership plays important roles in the outcome of any organized effort aimed at achieving a particular goal or set of goals. It determines the quality of process and output of the organizational system to the extent that, without it, goals may be difficult to achieve. Leadership is a process by which individuals at the helm of affairs, change the minds of others, with the intention of moving their institution forward towards accomplishing specified goals and objectives (Nwabueze, Chukwuji & Ugoezuonu, 2017).

The communication skills of a PR practitioner are so essential in determining effectiveness of leadership and management of any organisation. However, it appears that many PR professionals are not much in tune with the necessary communication skills to build their organizations' environment. In the South-East Nigeria, the level of skills of PR practitioners and their relative impact on improved organizational climate and communication are not known with certainty. Thus, this study hypothesized that:

- public relations practitioner communication skills have not made any significant effect on effective management of organizations in South-East Nigeria
- public relations practitioner's skills have not made any significant impact on improving organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria.

Following the above, the questions this study attempted to answer are the following:

- does public relations practitioner communication skill determine effective management of organizations in South-East region of Nigeria?
- does public relations practitioner's skill improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria?

The remaining parts of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the relevant concepts, theories and empirical views in the literature while section 3 discussed the materials and methods used in analysis. The result of findings with discussions was presented in Section 4 and section 5 highlighted the summary conclusion and recommendations made.

Review of Important Literature

Importance of Public relations practitioners

Public relations practitioners identify consequences of decisions and the presence of publics by engaging in environmental scanning and issues management (Kente & Salisu, 2021; Uduji et al, 2020, 2021, 2023). Environmental scanning means that they do research and talk to community leaders, leaders of activist groups, or government officials to find out who the publics are and what issues these publics might create (Aja et al, 2019; Iringe-Koko & Wagbara, 2019; Okolo-Obasi & Uduji, 2022). They then help the organization manage

these issues by communicating personally or through media with the publics who create them. Public relations practitioners who take a professional approach base their communication programmes on more sophisticated and effective models (Guanah et al, 2024; Asongu et al, 2020b) The two-way asymmetrical model uses research to develop messages that are likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organization wants. PR communication for employees' performance in an organization must involve deliberate plan, research, information and communication (Nwanmuoh et al, 2023; Uduji et al, 2023a). Public relations also have been an occupation defined more by its techniques than by its theory and most public relations practitioners have been the master of a number of techniques (Suleiman et al, 2024). They have known how to secure media coverage, prepare press releases, write speeches, write and design brochures, produce video news releases, lobby representatives in congress, stage a special event, or prepare an annual report (Ivwhighren & Umukoro, 2022; Asongu et al, 2019b). To Uduji et al (2019c) Uduji et al (2020), Salau (2021) Salau and Omotosho (2021) and Nnabuko (2022), organizations that employ individual public relations practitioners or public relations firms have begun to recognize public relations as an important management function. They recognize that public relations have value to an organization because it helps to balance the self-interest of the organization with the interest of people who are affected by the organization or who have the power to affect the organization, people that we call "Publics" (Oluwasola et al, 2017). Finally, scholars, Onyeokoro & Esi-Ubani (2018), Oti et al (2016), Salau (2021) Salau & Omotosho (2021), believe that almost all public relations practice is global rather than confined to the borders of only one company. According to Nwanmuoh et al (2022), PR Practice should avoid gender disparity in the profession to ensure national development.

Leadership and PR Practitioners

Leadership is of huge importance in management and organization because of its far-reaching effect on the accomplishment of organizational goals. Because of its key role in the success or failure of organizations, leadership has long been a focus of study by students, theorists, researchers and public relations practitioners, particularly in the last five decades. Leadership means inspiring people to do their best to achieve a desired result. According to Nwabueze, Chukwuji and Ugwoezuonu (2017), Asongu et al (2020a, leadership is the ability to successfully integrate and maximize available resources, within the internal and external environment for the attainment of institutional or national goals. Armstrong (2012) asserts that, leadership involves developing and communicating a vision for the future. A leader is someone who directs, organizes, controls and manages the activities of an organization aimed at achieving the goals, and objective of that organization. Leadership plays an important role in the outcome of any organized effort aimed at achieving a particular goal or set of goals. It determines the quality of process and output of the organizational system to the extent that, without it, goals may be difficult to achieve. Leadership can be seen as a process by which individuals at the helm of affairs, change the minds of others, with the intention of moving their institution forward towards

accomplishing specified goals and objectives (Nwabueze, Chukwuji and Ugoezuonu, 2017). Leadership position are practiced by those who are at the helm of affairs in the organization known as 'leaders.'

Organizational leaders are charged with the task of handling administrative matters in an organization for productivity and institutional development. To Chiakaan et al (2021), Okolo-Obasi and Uduji (2022), a leader is an administrator who oversees the activities of a group, motivating them to achieve organizational objectives. In this regard, it is the duty of the leaders to initiate, organize, motivate and direct the activities of the employees to achieve set goals (Okaiyeto & Ottah, 2021). They attract voluntary commitment from followers, energize them and transform institutions into new entities with greater potential for growth, excellence and global competitiveness. Before one can be a good leader, he must first learn to be a great follower. This implies that the best leaders are those who have served many apprenticeships in an organization. PR campaign should be issue based rather than negative, Nwanmuoh et al (2012).

However, the strength of any institution is a direct result of the strength of its leaders as well as their functional performances (Pwashikai, Alyegba, & Nweze, 2019). The leader administers the organization with administrative and management activities for institutional growth and improvement. They perform their duties by providing the right kind of leadership to affect the kind of climate which is conducive for administration and development (Ukala, Nwabueze & Madumere - Obike, 2017).

While leaders set the direction and build an inspiring vision, they must possess leadership skills in order to guide subordinates to the right destination in a smooth and efficient way.

Leadership Skill

Skills therefore, is a proficiency that is acquired or developed through training or experience (Johh & Halliru, 2020). Lambert (2000) defines skill as the ability and capacity acquired through systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving idea (cognitive skills), things (technical skills) and a lot of people (interpersonal skills). To Nwafor and Anyasor (2020) Ugoani (2020), Nwafor and Anyasor (2020) Ugoani (2020), skills could be said to be the acquired energy or expertise over time that aids or facilities the accomplishment of tasks. Leadership skills therefore, entail leadership ability, competence, proficiency, etc, which require a certain mindset to lead, communicate positively and effectively, being brave and honest, and taking ownership and responsibility over others (Okoye & Okafor, 2020; Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2022). The leadership skills that would be highlighted in this paper include public relations practitioners' skills in employee development, improving organization climate and communication skills. These skills involve the leader motivating, inspiring people, getting elected, getting selected as a group leader, completing projects on time, setting priorities, breaking through the red tape, organizing projects and programmes, working closely and smoothly with others, and taking the initiative when the opportunity appears. It also entails handling details well without losing sight of the big pictures, being responsive to others'

needs and open to other people's ideas, strategic thinking, effective problem solving, good decision making, and effective communication (Akintola et al, 2023). It equally entails creating a conducive environment, time management, self-motivation, delegating people, giving and receiving feedback, work in groups and conducting meetings, leading effective discussion, managing conflict, understanding group process, resource allocation and management, employee development, employee evaluation, among others (Adams et al, 2023). PR practice helps to make employees adaptable to changing situation especially in conflict management, Nwanmuoh et al (2021).

The first skill, which is employee development, is very crucial for public relations practitioners. Organizational system requires highly skilled and competent personnel to sustain and achieve the goals and objectives of the system. Staff development refers to all training and education undertaken by an employer to improve the occupational and personal knowledge, skills and attitudes of employee. According to Nwabueze and Onyenandu (2015), Asongu et al (2019a), staff development is aimed at equipping the staff in the organization to be able to discharge his professional responsibility effectively and efficiency in achieving organizational goals.

Public relations practitioners' skill in resource allocation and management function is another leadership skill for effective administrative performance. Improving the quality of performance goes beyond the mere provision of large sums of money or, physical resource or inputs in an organization; it encompasses the management and use of these resources in the organization (Elijah & Habu, 2022). Public relations practitioners' skill in improving the organization climate is an administrative function. The term climate refers to the internal quality of an organization as experienced by members (Niyitse & Agbeke, 2023). Public relations practitioners must employ an open climate, which depicts a situation where the members enjoy extremely high motivational supports. The public relations practitioner has to employ the supportive and participatory system whereby the staff is involved in taking decision and communicate effectively (Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2019; Shimiawua, 2022). The public relations practitioner's participative system is most consistent with the climate for effective leadership. However, the more participative the managerial system, the more open the institutional climate becomes. Participative relationship is a situation whereby the public relations practitioner and the staff jointly take decisions. and contribute effectively to the achievement of organizational goals in a supportive organization climate (Madumere-Obike & Nwabueze, 2010).

PR and Communication

The concept of communication is wide as well the concept of development. These concepts are varied but they seem to be inseparable no matter from which angle they are viewed (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). There seems to be a large acceptance of the assumption that the characteristics of a communicator impact greatly on the acceptance of the message by the audience. Communication implies educating the populace and guiding towards an adoption of the recommended practices by the message recipients. As reported by Eisend,

(2006), Uduji et al (2019a), Asongu et al (2020c) Credibility entails a rating of the source by the receiver in relation to the disseminated message which enables him (the receiver) to attribute truth and substance to the message. In his search, revealed that the weight attached to a source's trustworthiness has a significant impact on the recipient rates of the piece of information or message received. drawing evidence from a five-decade critical review of articles on persuasiveness of source credibility, pornpitakpan (2004) noted that a highly credible source often elicits more favorable disposition to an advocacy than a lowly credible one. Abdulbaqi and Mustaffa (2011) advanced that the socioeconomic status of the source be taken into consideration in ensuring message effectiveness. The duo found a significant relationship between the socio-economic status of the source and effective dissemination of information. Communication has been shown to result only when information from the source gets to the intended receiver. This then means that effective communication will involve the use of various processes which will guarantee that any information from the source actually get to the receiver in its intended form without the use of communication in an organization, the various arms or sections in such an organization would just be functioning in isolation (Igben, 2022). When this obtains, it would be difficult to direct the energies of individuals on immediate goals that need prompt attention.

PR and Organizational Management

Public relations practitioners also need skills in organizational management. This can be seen as having appropriate skills to manage available organizational resource, which includes the employees and materials. An effective public relations practitioner uses appropriate strategies that demand the use of variety of tools and new technological devices used for training (Nwabueze, 2011; Okolo-Obasi et al, 2021). In essence, the public relations practitioners must be skilled in the provision/acquisition of organizational communication strategies and make sure they are appropriately used in order to achieve the goal.

The public relations practitioners' communication skill is very important in organizational system, which makes a lot of differences. It is the lifeline to accomplishing the goals of the organization. According to Uche, Nwabueze and Ememe (2009), Uduji et al (2020) when members of the organization as a team communicate effectively, they feel connected, understood, valued, trusted, and respected. When information is transmitted effectively, the organization is likely to move forward towards goal attainment. It is only when people in an organization do not communicate effectively and are not in communication link that, they often feel unappreciated, misunderstood, defensive, hostile, frustrated or distressed (Shimiawua, 2022). Therefore, it is important that the public relations practitioners be highly skilled in the process of communication in the organization. In a nutshell, public relations practitioner's communication skills must be very creative, identify the best option, clarity of judgment, firm, always ready to implement decisions, put his emotions aside and apply effective measures for smooth communication performance (Uduji and Okolo-Obasi, 2018a; Ezeah, & Ogbonna, 2022)

communication in organization may be seen as the ability to carry out all administrative functions in the organization for the improvement of employees as well as enhancing the growth and development of that organization (Obukoadata et al, 2021). The Chambers Dictionary (2006) defines performance as the act of performing, carrying out of something, something done or success in working. Public relations successfully assist to perform well in management function. In addition, he does the right things and produces creative alternatives. He tries to optimize the utilization of resources to obtain the required result. To make the best of his position, equal loads should be distributed to all members of the employees. In fact, there is equitable division of labour and assignment based on individual capability and interest to enhance performance. He is a leader, and be seen actually leading with insight, originality, initiative, emotional stability, communicative ability, popularity and good sense of judgment. The performance of the public relations practitioner must be consistent with the purposes of the organization. He has to lead by example, because, if he flaws in any way, the followers will follow suit. According to Blau and Scott (1963), Ganiyu et al (2021), Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2018b) administrative performance of communication expert is of a great significance because, it determines the amount of influence he has over subordinates. In addition, public relations practitioners must use appropriate skills such as: employee development, resources allocation and management, improving organization climate, communication, decision-making skills and evaluation among others in an organization for the achievement of organization goals and objectives.

Organizations largely function by means of managers and supervisors who exercise leadership in order to act their teams into action and ensure that they achieve the results expected of them. Goleman, (2000), reported that a study by Hay Mcber of 3,871 executives, selected from a database of more than 20,000 executives worldwide, established that leadership had a direct impact in organizational climate and that climate in turn accounted for nearly one third of the financial results of organizations. The conclusion from research conducted by Higgs (2006), Uduji et al (2020) was that leadership behaviour accounts to almost 50 percent of the difference between change success and failure.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theory that guided this study is Fielders Contingency theory of leadership effectiveness. The theory was propounded by Fiedler in 1967. From the finding of this research, a combination of the trait and situation make up the contingency theory of leadership. This theory to a large extent indicates the ability a leader exercise to influence the task situation and the degree to which the leaders style, personality and approach fit the group (Oluwuo & Nwabueze, 2016). Fiedler also assumed that, what makes a leader is not only the personality attributes, but also, the situational factors, and the interaction between the leader and the situational characteristics that influence effectiveness of leadership. Leadership - followership relationship, which is concerned with how well the leader likes members and the way he is liked by the group members too. Also, the task

structure, which involves the extent to which the work is laid down on a step-to-step basis is a leadership function. In addition, leader-position power refers to the amount of formal authority a leader possesses. Fiedler's contingency theory postulates that there is no single best way for the manager to lead. He states that, situations create different leadership styles required for a manager.

The relevance of contingency theory to this paper with reference to leader-follower relationship is that, it has to do with the organization climate which focused on the public relations practitioner's behaviour or style of interaction with the employees. There should be good rapport between the public relations practitioner and employee and the community. These relationships depend on the public relations practitioner's managerial skills. In the organization, there should be open climate cordial, friendly relationship not harsh or hostile, but where everyone is free to make their contributions for the actualization of organizational goals. In addition to conducive organization climate, good communication is an absolute prerequisite for the efficient running of the organization. For an organization to maintain a good working relationship among its workers, there must be effective communication. The public relations practitioner should decide on the type of information to be imparted formally or informally.

Method and Materials

Area of Study

The research was conducted in the five states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo that makes up the South-East geopolitical region of Nigeria. According to Uduji et al (2019b), Nwanmouh et al (2024), South-East region is made up of 95 Local Government Areas (LGAs) situated in a total land mass of about 29525Km². NBS (2023) estimated the total population of the region to about 21,955,414 with about 51% female and about 61% under 30 years. See Figure 1

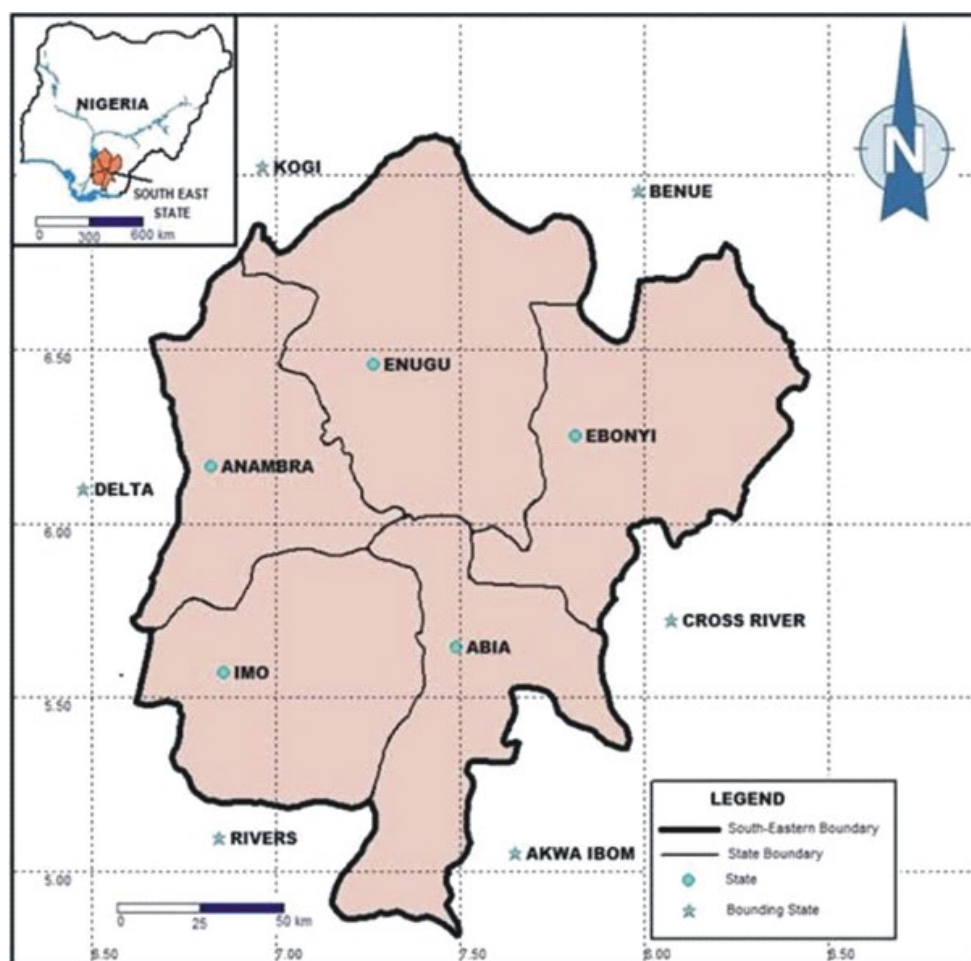


Figure 1: Map showing the constituent states of the South-East, Nigeria

Source: Uduji et al (2018)

Research Design

We used descriptive research designs in this study as all we did was to describe the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Hence, this design was used to discover details about why public relations practitioner communication skill determine effective management of organizations in South-East region of Nigeria and also why describe how public relations practitioner's skill improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria. It explains the phenomenon with the aim of establishing the relationship between the variables. Therefore, explanatory design was deemed suitable in finding the effect of the political public relation on voters' attitude.

Sample size

Because the population of the targeted population is not known with certainty, the sample size for this study was determined using the formula developed by Cochran (1977) mathematically represented as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Equation 1

In equation 1, n = the sample size;

z represents the standard normal deviation for a given level of confidence, (95% confidence =1.96)

d = margin of error at 0.05 for CI at 95%;

p = proportion to be estimated. If the value of p is not known with certainty, p is always assumed to be 0.5. Therefore, we calculated the sample size thus:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2(0.07)(1-0.07)}{0.05^2} = n = \frac{0.250088}{0.0025} = 100.0353; \text{ this, we approximated to } 100$$

Sampling Procedure

We used two-staged sampling method involving both quota and simple random samplings techniques in selecting the respondents used in this study. In the first stage, using quota sampling technique, we assigned 20 respondents each to all the five states of the region. This ensures that each state gets equal size of the sample. The second stage saw us using systematic random sampling technique to select 20 PR practitioners from each of the state, hence a total of 100 respondents were selected for survey.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected and used in this work. While the main data of focus was the primary data, the secondary data generated from secondary sources were used to validate the outcomes from the primary data. We collected the primary data using participatory research technique because the views of those being studied is crucial. Participatory research technique of survey was employed and we used structured questionnaire code named "Public Relations Practitioners" Leadership Skills as Determinants of Effective Communication in an Organization (PRPLSDECO) in generating the data from respondents. This instrument (questionnaire) was administered directly to the respondents in a semi structure interview manner as a suitable tool to assess qualitative issues by quantitative information. This manner of administration was to ensure that all the questionnaires are completed with a good understanding by the respondents and timely. We distributed score along the questionnaire according to the objectives of the study as also weighed in a five-point likert scale form.

Methods of Data Analysis

In analyzing the effect of public relations practitioners' leadership skills as determinants of effective communication in organizations in the region of South-East Nigeria, the gleaned field data were carefully treated, edited and coded in statistical packages for social science (SPSS) 28.0. The treated data were rigorously analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics to be able to realize the objectives of the study.

The results generated from the study as obtained from descriptive statistics were presented in charts, tables and figures. Inferential statistic of Persons Product Moment Correlation, and T-test were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.5 Significance level while mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. In answering the research questions, a mean criterion of 2.50 of the likert scale was calculated to assess the means response from the respondents, thus, any mean response above 2.50 is agreed upon otherwise disagreed upon. Also, a critical value of 1.96 was used to assess the T- test calculate value, hence: any T-calculated value above the critical value is rejected and any below is accepted.

Result of Findings

Socio-Economic Characteristics.

The study started analysis of the respondents' view with a description of some of their demographic (age, marital status etc), social (education etc), and economic (occupation, household income) characteristic. These characteristics are important in understanding the differences in the socio-economic and demographic status of the voters across the five states of southeast region.

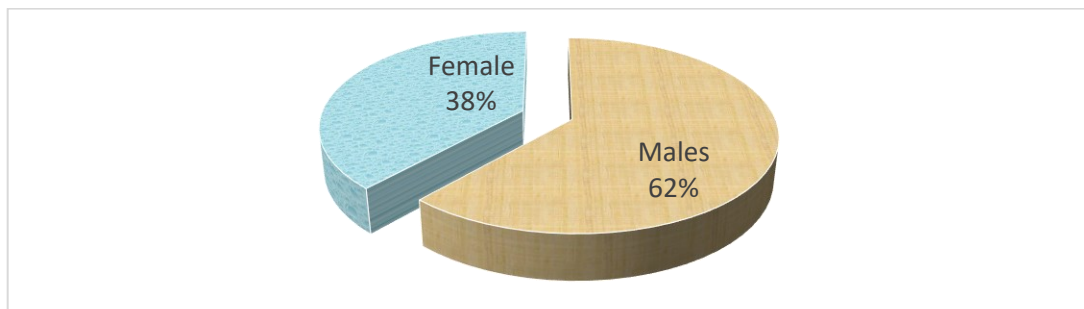


Figure 4.1: Sex of Respondents

Source: Authors' Computation

Analysis (Figure 4.1) shows that about 62% of the respondents were males while about 38% of the were females. This shows that both sexes are adequately represented in the profession of public relations practices. Also Table 4.1 shows that while 15% of the respondents are below 30 years of age, are 37% are between the ages of 31- 40, and 26% between the ages of 41 – 50 years. Others are about 13% that are between 51 to 60 while only about 10% are above 60 years. This shows that the majority of PR practitioners are within their active and productive ages of 50 years or below. This agrees with the assertions of scholars like Uduji et al (2021), Shaibu (2021) Nnabuko & Onyiaji (2021), that PR practice in Nigeria is still in its developing stage.

Table 4.1 Age of the respondents

Age of Respondents in Years	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
30 and below	14	15	15
31- 40	35	37	52
41-50	24	26	78
51-60	12	13	90
Above 60	9	10	100
	94	100	

Source: Authors’ Computation

Analysis (Figure 4.2) indicates that while only 6% of PR practitioner are not formally educated, only about 14% completed basic education and 26% completed secondary education. Also while about 44%, completed tertiary education like HND and BSC, about 10% has post graduate education. This is an indication that while only about 54% of the PR practitioners are well trained to be in the profession, about 26% are half-baked while 19% are not baked at all. This confirms the insinuations scholars like Adama and Okechukwu (2019), Ugwu (2019), Chiakaan & Bamigboye (2024), that many quacks are paraded in the profession and that has highly dented the output and image of the profession. dominance of male in political participation in the region as opined.

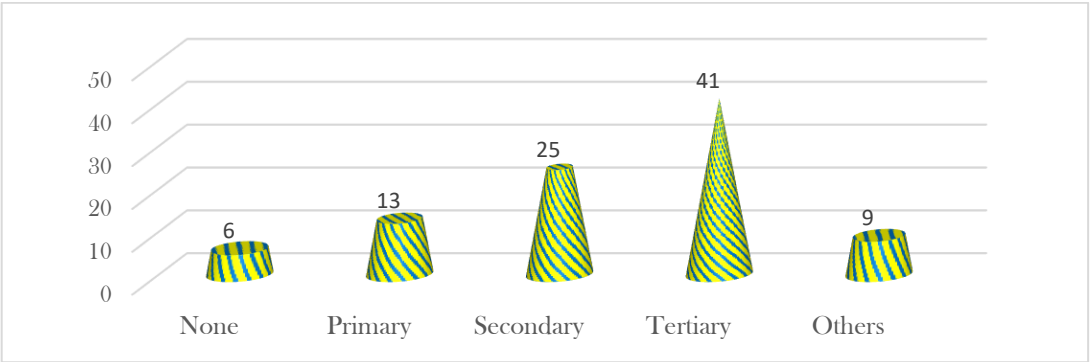


Figure 4.2 Level of Education of Respondents

Source: Authors’ Computation

Analysis (Table 4.2), indicates that while about 22% of the respondent has practiced PR for five year or less, about 31% has been in the profession for between 6 to 10 years and only about 25% has been in the practice for more than 25 years. In all, it shows that while about 53% has practiced 10 years or less, about 83% has not practiced more than 20 years and only 17% has practiced beyond 20 years. This level of years of experience still buttress the young nature of PR practice especially in the region under review and goes further to buttress why there may be much of quacks in the profession. This is owing to the fact that according to Igben & Ilaya (2021), Arabo (2022) Shimiawua (2022) and Sule (2023), whether

professionally practiced or otherwise, relationship with both internal and external environments of any organization must be managed.

Table 4.2 Years of Experience of the Respondents

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
1-5	21	22	22
6- 10	29	31	53
11 – 15	17	18	71
16 - 20	11	12	83
21 - 25	9	10	93
Above 25	7	7	100
	94	100	

Source: Authors' Computation

Objective 1 of the Study

Attempts were made to ascertain how PR Practitioner's Communication Skills can enhance effective communication in an organization. In this, questions and opinions were raised around the research question 1 in a likert scale and the response of PR practitioners were weighted.

Table 4.3: Mean scores of Respondent PR practitioners on the ways PR practitioners' skills can determine effective communication in an organization

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA/A ¹		D/Str.D		U		Mean Score		Decision
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	Std.D	
1	PR Practitioners employees skills helps Produce highly motivated, Conscientious and efficient Communication	62	66	28	30	4	4	3.03	0.90	Agreed
2	PR Practitioner who encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in employees Performs well in organization	72	77	17	18	5	5	3.12	0.90	Agreed
3	PR Practitioners that helps employees Fit into the social life of host community and society at large to achieve organization goals perform well administratively	58	62	33	36	3	2	2.98	0.90	Agreed
4	PR Practitioner who helps to enhance Employees commitment to organizational	66	70	26	28	2	2	3.15	0.05	Agreed

¹ SA = Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, U = Undecided, D = Dis agreed, SD = Strongly Dis agreed, Std.D = Standard Deviation, Freq. = Frequency, % = Percentage of Respondents

	Goals perform well administratively									
5	PR Practitioner who provides employees With intellectual and professional Knowledge in carrying out their assignment Succeed in an organization	73	78	15	16	6	6	3.21	0.88	Agreed
6	PR Practitioner who helps to make Employees adaptable to changing Situations do well in management Function	69	73	21	23	4	4	3.03	0.91	Agreed
7	PR Officer who helps employees attain Agreed Specific managerial functions succeeds In the attainment of organizational Goals	56	60	35	37	3	3	3.17	0.89	Agreed
8	PR Practitioner who help to impact New technological communication Especially with the electronic Devices enhances effective Managerial performance	65	69	24	26	5	5	3.12	0.90	Agreed
9	PR Practitioners skill of strengthening The competence of employees enhances Organizational management function	78	83	5	5	11	12	3.14	0.89	Agreed
10	Inadequate skills of performing Administrative function in the Organization by PR Practitioners Support the growth of employees	28	30	52	55	14	15	1.96	1.05	Disagreed
11	PR officers skill of helping the employees To overcome their weaknesses enhances Administrative performance	72	77	17	18	5	5	3.24	0.88	Agreed
12	PR Practitioners skill of enhancing The system with organizational changes And innovations supports the managerial Functions	81	86	6	6	7	7	3.35	0.87	Agreed
13	PR Practitioners skill of keeping the Employees abreast with proper Communication skills enhances Managerial performance	61	65	29	31	4	4	3.20	0.88	Agreed
Aggregate Mean Score and Standard Deviation								3.1	0.84	

Source: Authors' Computation

Analysis (Table 4.3) shows frequencies percentages, mean score and standard deviation of respondent PR practitioners on the ways public relations employees development skills can determine effective communication in organizations. The respondents disagreed with only item 10 with low mean score below 2.50 and agreed with other 12 items that has high mean scores greater than the mean criterion of 2.50, and disagreed on item. However, in all, the aggregate mean scores of 3.10 with aggregate standard deviation of 0.84. the implication here is that; respondent PR practitioners have accepted the positive impact of skills of on effective communication in any organisation.

Following this finding, we tested the first hypothesis of the study and Analysis (Table 4.4) conveys the result.

Table 4.4: Public relations practitioner communication skills have not made any significant effect on effective management of organizations in South-East Nigeria

Particulars	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	DW	Standard Coefficient		F	Sig
					Beta	T. value		
Effective management of organizations	0.924(a)	0.854	0.854	.320	0.924	36.570	1337.379	0.000

Source: Authors' Computation

Here, R stands for Correlation coefficient or Beta, R² stands for Coefficient of Determination, Adj.R² stands for Adjusted coefficient of Determination, DW= Durbin Watson (d) test statistic, T – Value= Student t- test statistics, F= F= test statistics.

With the model estimation as 1.031+0.785; the result indicates that Public relations practitioner communication skills have positive impact on effective management of organizations in South-East Nigeria. This is because t-calculated = 36.570, this is above the rule of thumb positivity of 2 and coefficient of convenience (1.031). The variations from the model are explained by the model as indicated from the coefficient of the determination (R²) value of 92.4%. On this note we rejected the null hypothesis and conclude that Public relations practitioner communication skills have made any significant effect on effective management of organizations in South-East Nigeria

Therefore, the ways public relations practitioner's employee's development skills can determine effective communication in an organization in south-east, Nigeria include: assisting in producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient employees; encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in employees; helping employees fit into the social life of host community and society at large to achieve organizational goals; helping to enhance employees commitment to organizational goals; providing employees with the intellectual and professional knowledge in carrying out their assignment; and helping to

make employees adaptable to changing situations (Habu, 2022; Umaru & Arabo, 2022; Akintola et al, 2023).

Also, practitioners that help employees attain specific management functions succeed in attainment of organizational goals, those that help to impact new technological techniques especially with the electronic devices enhance organizational goals (Okwelle et al, 2018; Oyeleke et al, 2018). This finding agrees with Nnabuko and Onyiaji (2021), Nyitse and Agbeke (2023) in that public relations practitioners' skills of strengthening the competence of employees enhance managerial functions, their skills of keeping the employees abreast with proper communication skills enhance organizational performance, their skills of helping the employees to overcome their weaknesses enhance administrative performance, their skills of enhancing the system with organizational changes and innovations support the administrative functions, and adequate skills of performing administrative functions in an organization by PR practitioners support the growth of employees.

Objective 2: How Public Relations Practitioners' skills can improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria.

Attempts were also made to ascertain how PR Practitioner's skills can improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria. In this, about 10 items were raised around the research question 2 in a likert scale and the response of PR practitioners were weighted.

Table 4.5: Means scores of PR practitioners on the ways practitioners' skill in improving organization climate can determine effective communication in an organization

S/N	Questionnaire items	SA/A		D/Str.D		Und		Mean Score		Decision
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	Std.D	
1	PR practitioner must be an active	56	60	35	37	3	3	3.26	0.87	Agreed
2	Effective speaking skills help the PR practitioner to communicate successfully in the system	78	83	5	5	11	12	3.21	0.88	Agreed
3	Communicating in difficult situations is an advantage towards the achievement of effective administration	65	69	24	26	5	5	3.09	0.90	Agreed
4	PR practitioner with mediation skills always attain effectiveness in an organization	62	66	28	30	4	4	3.12	0.89	Agreed
5	Conflict resolution is a communication skill that can be used to achieve effectiveness in an organization	58	62	33	36	3	2	3.35	0.86	Agreed
6	Building rapport with host communities by PR practitioners	72	77	17	18	5	5	3.13	0.89	Agreed

	helps in achieving effective organization									
7	Negotiation skills of a PR practitioner help to promote managerial effectiveness	61	65	29	31	4	4	3.27	0.86	Agreed
8	PR practitioner's creative development skills enhance managerial communication performance	69	73	21	23	4	4	3.24	0.87	Agreed
9	Ability of the PR practitioner to reduce misunderstanding among employees make an organization successful	66	70	26	28	2	2	3.24	0.87	Agreed
10	Effective verbal communication skill among PR practitioners is a viable skill in achievement of organizational goals	73	78	15	16	6	6	3.08	0.90	Agreed
Aggregate Mean Score and Standard Deviation								3.199	0.879	

Source: Authors' Computation

Result from (Table 4.5) shows frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation of respondent PR practitioners on ways PR practitioners' communication skills can determine effective communication performance in an organization in South-East, Nigeria. The respondent PR practitioners agreed on all the items raised as the scores show high mean scores greater than the mean criterion of 2.50.

As indicated in the (Table 4.5) that the aggregate mean score was 3.19 with standard deviations of 0.879, this implies that, the respondents agreed on the fact that Public Relations Practitioners' skills improve organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 4.6: Public relations practitioner's skills have not made any significant impact on improving organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria

Particulars	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	DW	Standard Coefficient		F	Sig
					Beta	T. value		
Effective management of organizations	0.837(a)	0.701	0.700	.094	0.837	23.113	534.204	0.000

Source: Authors' Computation

Where:

R= Correlation coefficient or Beta, R²= Coefficient of Determination, Adj.R²= Adjusted coefficient of Determination

DW= Durbin Watson (d) test statistic, T – Value= Student t- test statistics, and F= F= test statistics

The estimation of this model stands as $0.818+1.160$ indicating that public relations practitioner's skills have made significant impact on improving organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria. this follows the indication that $t = 23.113$ which is above the rule of thumb positivity of 2 and coefficient of socialization (0.818). The variations from the model are explained by the model as indicated from the coefficient of the determination (R^2) value of 0.701. This shows a positive relationship between public relations practitioner's skills and improving organizational climate for effective communication in organizations.

Therefore, PR practitioners' communication skills are very important in an organization managerial performance. This follows the proposition of scholars like; Kehinde & Igbozuruike (2016) Igben & Madubuchukwu (2017) Ogunyombo & Azeez (2018), in that PR practitioners must be an active listener to communicate effectively in the system, must possess speaking skills to communicate successfully in the system, be communicating in difficult situations for the achievement of effective organizational management, possess mediation skills always for the effectiveness of the organization, resolve conflict as a communication skill to achieve effectiveness in organization, build rapport with host communication in an organization, possess negotiation skills to help promote managerial effectiveness, possess creative development skills to enhance organizational performance, have the ability to reduce misunderstanding among employees to make the organization successful, and possess effective verbal communication skill as a viable skill in the achievement of organizational goals.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that, the ways PR practitioners' skill in improving organization climate can determine communication performance in an organization in South-East in various ways. Such way includes: PR practitioners' involvement in improving the organization environmental conditions, being in possession of leadership skills that help employees work without bickering and griping. This agrees with Awofadeju (2023), in that effective speaking skills help the PR practitioner to communicate successfully in the system. Also, PR practitioners' involvement on the safety and health of employees enhances organization communication performance, this confirms the assertion of Olaoluwa et al (2022) Elijah and Habu (2022) who also included that building rapport with host communities by PR practitioners helps in achieving effective organization and beautifying the organization environment with followers and tress improve the organization climate for effective communication and performance. Ozioko & Abubakar (2019) Olabanjo et al (2019) also posited that maintaining general cleanliness of organization compound helps to improve the organization climate for effective managerial function, this is in line with the position of this study.

From the result of test of hypothesis one, it shows that public relations practitioner communication skills have made any significant effect on effective management of organizations in South-East Nigeria. This finding contradicts Oboegbulem (2002) who observes that, many leaders are ineffective and that most have relatively closed climate because of the use of professional PR practitioners. It follows Uduji (2012), Arabo (2022), Nwanmouh et (2024) Suleiman et al (2024), in concluding that enhanced skills in PR practice is enhanced organization. Also, Ezeah, & Ogbonna (2022) confirms it that, the position of PR practitioner as the manager is to carryout effective communication functions that can enhance the growth and development of the organization.

The findings equally revealed that, public relations practitioner's communication skills are very important in determining effective managerial performance. The study noted that PR practitioners must be an active listener to communicate effectively in the system as also suggested by the likes of Eneh (2007a) Eneh (2007b), Oboh & Enobakhare (2010), Effiom (2019), Alikor & Amadi (2021). Possession of speaking skills to communicate successfully in the system and being able to be communicating in difficult situations for the achievement of effective administration are added qualities required of professional PR practice. Other areas noted by the study includes: possessing mediations skills always for the effectiveness of the organization, building rapport to achieve effective administration, possess negotiation skills to help promote managerial effectiveness, possess creative development skills to enhance organizational performance, have the ability to reduce misunderstanding among employees to make administration successful, and possess effective verbal communication skill as a viable skill in achievement of organizational goals. The result from test of hypothesis two confirms that PR practitioners' skill improve organization climate for effective communication performance in organization in South-East, Nigeria. this finding is in line with, Uche, Nwabueze and Ememe (2009) who defined communication skill as the process of sharing information to receive a common understanding between an organization and its publics. Also, Nnabuko, & Asemah (2014) asserted that, it is the act of transmitting information, thoughts, opinion, or feelings, through speech or signs, or actions, from a source to receiver which must be done to improve organizations' climate.

Conclusion

The study had shown that, Public Relations Practitioners' development and skills communication skills are key determination of effective communication performance in organization. Also, the study substantiates that public relations practitioner's skills have made significant impact on improving organizational climate for effective communication in organizations in South-East, Nigeria. hence it is required that all efforts should be made to reduce quickly and use well-trained and skilled professionals. Based on this fact, every PR practitioner must develop these skills that can help the growth and development of organizations to enhance employees' productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- PR practitioners of an organization in South-East, Nigeria should endeavour to possess the various development skills to improve employees' functional performance and enhance effective managerial functions in the organization for improvement and development.
- PR practitioners should possess the skills that would assist them to improve the organization climate for improved productivity and enhanced managerial performance in an organization.
- PR practitioners should acquire the necessary communication skills relevant in organization system to enhance effective managerial performance for the growth and development of the organization.
- PR practitioners should possess the skills of managing organizational facilities and resources to enhance managerial activities geared towards accomplishing the aim and objectives of the organization.

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