

**ASSESSMENT OF THE OBSERVANCE OF ETHICS AMONG UGANDA'S
PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS**

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Abstract

Guided by the propaganda theories, particularly how they relate to social responsibility, this research assessed the observance of ethics among Uganda's PR practitioners with emphasis on the level of truth, honesty and integrity observance. It focused on the analysis of the level of professionalism amongst Uganda's PR practitioners, clarification of PRAU's role and assessed the challenges to ethics observance among practitioners. A survey of 122 respondents was conducted to assess perceptions on ethics adherence among PR practitioners. Study results show that there were 80(65.6%) male and 42(34.4%) female respondents, with diverse titles ranging from 4(3.8%) Directors, 46(37.7%) Managers, 32(26.2%) PR assistants, 13(10.7%) Editors and 27(22.1%) Editorial Assistants.

Of great relevance, PR practitioners affirmed the possibility of practising with genuineness, honesty and integrity despite the existence of professional dilemmas. In other key findings, it was noted that adherence to professional ethics was rather complex and therefore difficult for practitioners to be truthful, honest and practice with integrity all the time owing to rigorous PR dilemmas characterized by the need to balance between confidentiality on one hand and candour, frankness and integrity, on the other.

There was also confirmation of unethical practices in spite of the level of professionalism among PR practitioners being high with 88.1% of them having and implementing laid down PR strategies. PRAU and IPRA had not provided adequate leadership to practitioners, with most respondents suggesting more visibility for PRAU. Obstacles to PR ethical observance were deeply engrained in the societal value system while corruption in society was found to adversely influence PR practices. The results further indicate existence of professional dilemmas such as the need for loyalty to the client vis-à-vis observance of professional standards and the need to adhere to PR ethical codes in relation to the need to balance between confidentiality and truthfulness as partly providing the explanation for failure to observe the PR ethical standards all the time. In addition, the results point to the need for PRAU to be seen to perform its watchdog role over PR practice through regular interaction with members and actions that portray it as a mentor; encourage practitioners to become IPRA members and sensitize the public on PR's cardinal values and ideals to change the critical public perceptions of PR that the public holds.