

THE ROLE OF PERSONAL ETHICS AND ORGANIZATION ETHICS IN DECISION MAKING FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The main concern in the context of ethical issues in public relations practice is, it is conceptualized based on descriptive and normative ethics where personal evaluation and collective evaluation of ethical situations respectively applied in decision making and this study managed to highlight the statistical relationship between personal and organizational factors in ethical decision-making among public relations practitioners, focusing on a locality of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The data is based on the questionnaire on public relations practitioners' ethical decisions that include the criteria of intention consideration, reasoning, and judgment, hence their ethical evaluation is used as the parameter to measure personal ethics. On the other hand, ethical climate reflects a collective perception of ethics in an organization, therefore used as the parameter to measure organizational ethics. A total of $n=100$ practitioners in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah was participating in this study. The data is tested using Pearson Correlation analysis. The result shows that practitioners' ethical evaluation has a statistically significant correlation with organizational ethical climate at $r=0.314$ and $p<0.01$, which is positive but moderately weak. This correlation indicates that personal and organizational ethics has a weak but positive correlation, and the correlation is statistically significant. The finding conclude that the weak correlation insinuates conflicting the ethical perceptions on both individual and organizational aspects. It can be summarized that the proactive measures can be applied to increase the consistency in criteria of personal ethics as well as the ethical climate of the organization in the pursuit of excellence in public relations.

Keywords: Ethical evaluation, ethical climate, decision making, correlation, public relations practitioners

INTRODUCTION

The public relations function helps an organization to strategically plan a deliberate effort to establish, manage, and sustain communication and mutually beneficial relations between the organization and its public (Lai, 2015). However unethical elements in public relations occurred and harm the interest of both the organization and the public in the sense of organizational image and reputation as well as public perception. The conflicting elements between personal and organizational ethics are prominent in the case of ethical misconduct among public relations practitioners such as incorporating manipulative, deceptive, misleading information, and other similar harmful ruses in public relations function. Furthermore, public relations' strategic communication functions are also used in cases of communication with harmful misinformation nature which defeat the purpose of public relations.

Grunig and Hunt in 1992 explain the purpose of public relations using the theory of excellence (also referred to as excellence theory) which primarily views public relations practice's ultimate pursuit is to achieve the most ethical practice through two-way symmetrical communication. The symmetry in this theory refers to the mutual benefit from the established communication and relations between an organization and its public. In this communications-relations dynamic, public relations concern with disseminating organizational messages, informing and sustaining the relationship between the organization and its strategic public rather than persuading them.

The problem arises when the attainment of 'mutual benefit' is not always the case in the practice of public relations. Unethical practices are prevalent in the public relations industry despite public relations' pursuit of excellence that is dependent on ethical, two-way symmetrical, and mutually beneficial relations between an organization and the public. This study is looking at the practitioners' decision-making process specifically how they evaluate ethical issues as individuals and as an extension of the organizational decision-makers. In short, this paper is discussing personal and organizational ethics in decision-making among public relations practitioners and gauges the relationship between them in the context of its pursuit in ethics.

Public relations practitioners' decisions in ethically challenging situations can help the organization to tell their stance in such situations that involve the interests of the public or their stakeholders and other constituents with the organization. For example, in 2014, Malaysian Airlines (MAS) public relations team responds to the disappearance of the MH370 flight to provide answers and explanations to the media, relatives of the passengers, and stakeholders regarding the tragedy. MAS organized press conferences that involved several spokespersons from different authorities from the local ministry and the royal police department. MAS also posted media releases but the announcement contains contradictory, imprecise, and incomplete information on the crisis mainly due to the lack of physical evidence, and caused confusion and misinformation (Zafra, 2018) among the key public and general public. Another sample case of contradictory information is in the Volkswagen's Diesel scandal in 2014. Volkswagen (automotive company) decided to advertise their Diesel engine car as safe to the environment with low emission which successfully persuades the public to purchase the car. The cars however emit 40 times higher nitrogen oxide than advertised. Nitrogen oxide is a gas that is associated with lung cancer among children, contributed to death, and polluting the environment (Bachmann, Ehrlich, & Ruzic, 2018; Merenda & Irwin, 2018) therefore not safe for the environment as advertised. The damage was done and the vehicles are recalled which cost Volkswagen its image, reputation, and relations with its customers, regulatory body, and stakeholders.

Organizational messages affected organization-public relationship as also seen in Legenda Cun Raya Campaign in 2017, Watsons Malaysia (retail pharmacy) published a promotional clip on their Facebook page which contain a sketch inspired from local Malay folktale 'Dayang Senandung' for the campaign. In that clip, it shows a man shocked by the sight of a woman with black skin but after she washes her face, her skin is no longer black to the relief of the man. The clip garnered public backlash with the use of #boikotwatsons among concerned users on Facebook since the message was interpreted as dark skin equals ugly and does not deserve love, and fair skin is beautiful and more valuable. Watsons issued an apology and removed the video the next day. The public responded to the clip mostly with contempt and concern about mistreatment based on skin color, which has its long history in

society. Watsons was unable to communicate the messages of inner beauty in that clip as mentioned in its apology therefore the clip is unfitting to be used in strategic communication and relation function with its public. The immediate apology issuance with explanation and the take-down of the clip from Watsons' Facebook page however helped maintain Watsons' relationship with its public since the #boikotwatsons is no longer used by the public to criticize Watsons. The active, real-time engagement between Watsons and its public in this case also demonstrates the use of social media to allow both the organization and the public to have balanced control of the organizational messages.

Those three sample cases show that public relations primarily help disseminate organizational messages to promote the organization or its product (goods or services) that is fundamental and beneficial to the public in their daily life in sense of making informed decisions that are related to the organization. However, unethical elements penetrate the practice thus damaging the communication and relations function. In such situations, public relations practitioners (hereinafter referred to as practitioners) are responsible to evaluate the organizational messages they are required to propagate, and the organizational messages should enable public relations to establish and manage the right information that will equally benefit the organization and the public. Inconsistency between personal evaluation and organizational perception on ethical issue prevail when practitioners establish and manage the organizational messages that convince the public to expect the value or benefit of the product beyond what the organization offers in reality. This study, therefore, examines the relationship between practitioners' evaluation and the organization's ethical climate in decision making using excellence theory to pinpoint the corresponding and conflicting parts in the organization-public relationship process in the pursuit of ethical practice.

The objective of this study is to determine a significant statistical relationship between personal evaluation on the ethical situation and organizational ethics perception in decision making by measuring the ethical evaluation and ethical climate of an organization. Since unethical practices prevail regardless of organizations' value or practitioners' value, this paper will observe how similar a practitioner evaluate an ethical situation with how the ethical situation is handled collectively. The statistical relationship between ethical evaluation (personal ethics) and ethical climate (organizational ethics) should reveal the extent of practitioners' ethical evaluation is related to the ethical climate of the organization and vice versa. The relationship will also reveal whether the ethical climate score is statistically related to one's ethical evaluation in pursuit of excellence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past research shows that ethical considerations as well as organization ethics are as important as the public relations practices itself in the particular organizations as public relations practitioners' decisions can be flawed despite intentional consideration. Kang in 2010 discussed how 21.7% of public relations practitioners were somehow dragged into an unethical situation by their superior's decision, 10.14% are forced to be silent, and 10.14% were not given the option to discuss ethical issues (Kang, 2010). This situation explains practitioners' ethical intention can still create an unethical decision in public relations practice. In other circumstances, practitioners might have full control where they evaluate an ethical situation and make decisions corresponding to their ethical intention that reflects

personal ethical evaluation. In this regard, an ethical decision that is inconsistent with practitioners' intent is ruled out from personal factors in the decision-making process.

People personally have their reason to justify their ethical stance in their decisions. One's reasoning is mainly based on consequence (the assessment of the outcome), and based on the virtue of the conduct (deontology). For example, in the case of MAS public relations crisis management of MH370 disappearance in 2014, MAS' indecision to announce the updates on the missing flight is rooted in the consequential reason that damage from not knowing the current situation is less than the damage of updating without physical evidence to substantiate the information. In such cases, consequential reasoning to prevent damage of misinformation outweighs the deontological virtue of keeping the public updated with any information at all. On the flip side, keeping up with the update with evidence outweighs the consequential concern in withholding the information related to the public. Therefore, practitioners' reasoning either consequential or deontological is crucial for justification of their ethical evaluation in decision making.

At the same time, the way public relations practitioners behave can contradict their intention and reasoning. For example, in the case of Volkswagen's Diesel scandal, practitioners might not intend to help Volkswagen to establish, manage, and sustain communication and relation that will harm Volkswagen in terms of image and reputation and harm the public who perceive the deceit as the truth since they are aware of the use of defeat device in the vehicle inspection. Volkswagen's public relations team also might not justify the false information in the advertisement because it defies the virtue of transparent communication, and it entails harmful outcomes to the organization's interests. Nevertheless, Volkswagen's public relations still disseminate the information that the vehicle is safe for the environment. The information reached the public and affects their purchasing behavior in favor of Volkswagen in the beginning. Volkswagen's diesel scandal is a specific sample case of a dubious element in the information of public interest. This situation demonstrates that in evaluating an ethical situation, one's intention and reasoning are separate from their judgment, which reflects the disparity between one's perception and behavior in an ethical situation, thus indicates that public relations practitioners' behavior can contradict their intention and reason. Therefore, this study measures personal ethics from practitioner's ethical evaluation that includes the criteria of (1) the consequential and deontological reasoning, (2) the intention consideration, and (3) their judgment. In this study, ethical evaluation refers to a process of perceiving and reacting to assess an ethical situation to make a decision. This process involves an individual in a personal setting and is discussed in the context of descriptive ethics. The criteria are measured separately to properly detect any inconsistencies in ethical evaluation.

Conflicts between personal and organizational ethics, which is the main theme of this study, also contribute to an unethical decision. Organizational ethics is based on the normative context of ethics in the organization which includes norms and guidelines (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Cullen, Victor, and Stephens' (1987) definition of ethical climate is used as the parameter of organizational ethics in this study. Ethical climate according to Cullen, Victor and Stephens refer to the shared perception of what is counts as a right and good thing in the organization. In this study, ethical climate refers to the imaginary circumstance of workspace environment, limited to a group of people working together to achieve one goal in organizational settings. It is sustained by an ideological edifice erected upon common experience, values, and perception on ethical issues. These elements are

combined and creating a sense of shared value which imparts the feeling of oneness and one common goal as their collective identity and norm manifested in the way ethical issues are addressed and handled in the organization and embodied in form of written or unwritten rules, regulations, or codes.

The establishment of ethics statements or codes and defined principles will help people in an organization to identify which actions are good and should be performed, and provide a standardized understanding, agreed-upon guidelines, of what is deemed as acceptable and guide the practitioners and everyone related to the organization of the boundaries in their ethics. In short, ethics statements are mainly established as a preventive measure as well as to avoid repetition in malpractice in the organization (Fawkes, 2012; E. Han & Ki, 2010; J. Y. Han, Park, & Jeong, 2013; Ki, Choi, & Lee, 2012; Tom Watson, 2014).

Amalina's (2014) study shows that one's ethical judgment is positively related to the ethical climate of the organization. This relationship suggests how one's behavioral tendency in ethical decision-making helps collectively in culminating ethical climate in the organization. Their analysis is in line with Bartels et al. (1998) which revealed that ethical climate is negatively related to the ethical violation, corroborated by Stevens (2008) that suggested implementation of a code of ethics in an organization is associated with less observed unethical behavior. Additionally, Mayer, Kuenzi, and Greenbaum's (2010) study supports Amalina's analysis that ethical climate is negatively related to misbehavior. Hasnah (2014) added to this descriptive-normative analysis from her study results that the organizations with high ethical climate have low conflicts between employees and managers.

The application of ethics statements as a normative tool in organizational ethics did not explain how one's intention, reason, and perception can contradict their behavior as well as the discrepancy between personal ethics and organizational ethics in cases of unethical decisions. In other words, unethical decisions are still plausible among inherently ethical individuals and ethical organizations, indicating the underlying dissonance between personal and organizational factors of ethical decision-making that challenge public relations' pursuit of excellence.

Though the impact of ethical violations on the relationship between an organization and its publics vary from case to case, the possible outcomes from the dynamic between ethical evaluation and ethical climate in practitioners' ethical decisions can be narrowed down to four scenarios: (1) ethical practitioners and ethical organization, (2) ethical practitioners and unethical organization, (3) unethical practitioners and ethical organization, and (4) unethical practitioners and unethical organization. Scenario number 1 is the ideal situation for public relations practitioners' evaluation of the ethical situation is consistent with an organizational ethical climate to achieve and sustain excellence in public relations. Scenario number 2, 3, and 4 however occur in conflicting situations between practitioners and the organizations differ with their pursuit of ethical practice through balanced communication. The dissonance between personal and organizational factors in decision making harms the inherent strategic communication and relations function between an organization and its public, which signifies diminish in mutual benefit (excellent practice).

The subject involved in this study is public relations practitioners to understand the decision-making process from their viewpoint. Practitioners execute various tasks in communication and relations tactics and strategies ranging from research, writings, content creations, event organizing, implementation of action plans, etcetera to bridge organization

with its public in line with organizational goals. On the other hand, when the public is making decisions related to the organization, they depend on the organizational messages and information provided through public relations. Organizational messages and information regarding the values and benefits offered to the public are crucial as well as the statement of side effect warnings, precautionary disclaimer, and product warnings to further help the public to make an informed decision. Product warnings helped the manufacturers to communicate with users about the danger of using a product so the user can gain benefit and avoid harm from it. For example, public relations practitioners in food industries can provide nutritional information and the harm of consumption (when there's any) on the label and advertisement. Another example is the public should be informed when they are reading or watching a created content. When the content is sponsored in form of affiliation, endorsement, shout-out, paid promotion, and product placement in multimedia content, practitioners need to clarify it with a label that conveys the nature of sponsorship. Without a clear statement of sponsorship in content creation, it would be deceiving the public with advertisement.

For practitioners, making an ethical decision could be a predicament that needs reconciliation between personal and organizational factors. As an extension of the dominant coalition in an organization, practitioners decide the organizational communication and relations tactics and strategies in an ethical situation to help the achievement of organizational goals. By defining the relationship between personal ethical evaluation and the ethical climate of the organization, this study will be able to strategically address the possible underlying conflicts specifically in regards to personal ethics and organizational ethics that challenge ethical decision mechanisms in the pursuit of excellence. The conflicts will be discussed in the context of personal factors (including intention consideration, reasoning, and judgment) and organizational factor (ethical climate). Therefore, based on the narrative of conflicts between personal and organizational ethics, this study uses a deductive approach to propose three hypotheses in practitioners' ethical decision-making circumstances for discussion.

H1: ethical evaluation has a statistically significant relationship with ethical climate in decision making. This hypothesis is formed based on the premise that ethical decision-making involves an individual's evaluation as well as the norm of the individual's environment, in this case, the organization.

H2: ethical evaluation has a positive correlation with ethical climate based on the premise that both practitioners and organizations similarly pursuing the most ethical practice through mutually beneficial communication and relation. The score of ethical evaluation supposedly increases or decreases together.

H3: ethical evaluation and ethical climate have a weak correlation due to the nature of ethically challenging scenarios that include conflicting interests in decision-making to achieve excellence in public relations practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a relational study that aims to identify the relationship between ethical evaluation and ethical climate in decision-making among public relations practitioners using excellence theory. By applying a non-experimental method to observe the variables, a statistical correlation test is used in data analysis and interpretation. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire form that is divided into Section A, Section B, and Section C.

In Section A, the respondents provide their demographic details and their involvement in public relations in their organization. In Section B, respondents' intention consideration is measured by modifying Deshpande's (1996) questionnaire consists of five psychometric items to measure the extent of perceived intention concerning ethical and unethical practice. Ethical reasoning is quantified and measured based on consequential and deontological reasoning concepts using seven ordinal scale questions at which 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Amalina's ethical judgment questionnaire (2014) is the instrument to measure respondents' judgment on their behavioral tendencies in the given ethical scenario. The ethical climate is measured in Section C of the questionnaire consists of ten item measures on management perception on organizational ethics.

The researcher approached the respondents through available contacts provided in the search engine and set a meeting schedule for them to participate in this study. Only consensual respondents partake in this study with awareness of the nature of this study, which is done for academic purposes only. The questionnaire form is distributed to a total of 115 practitioners in the field and five practitioners online, within the area of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (see Figure 1) using a convenient sampling method. In other words, this study purposively gathered data from respondents (non-probability sampling technique) who currently engaged in public relations efforts in their organization. The type of organization is specified to a certain sector, but they are entities of organization ranging from for-profits, non-profits, government, privately-owned companies, corporations, etcetera. Practitioners from these different organizations are contextually similar in the principle of function: planning a deliberate effort in building, managing, and sustaining a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and its public. A total of 100 forms are returned for analysis from 75 different organizations in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, making the sample size for this study $n=100$ for analysis. Table 1 summarized the questionnaire administration in this study. Pearson Correlation test is run to determine the association between ethical evaluations and ethical climate.

Figure 1: Area of study is in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

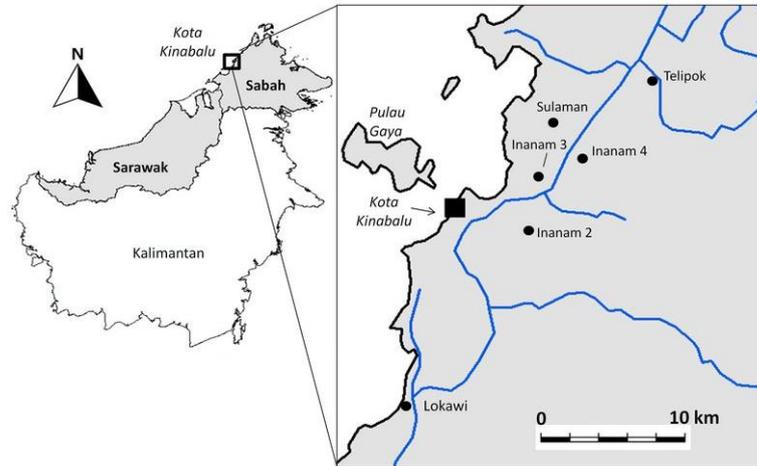


Table 1: Summary of questionnaire administration

| ADMINISTRATI ON MODE | DISTRIBUTED | RETURNED | COMPLETED | REMARKS |
|------------------------------------|-------------|----------|-----------|--|
| Self-administered on field | 95 | 77 | 75 | 18 forms were either not returned or returned without data |
| Self-administered online | 5 | 5 | 5 | |
| Researcher administration on field | 20 | 20 | 20 | |
| TOTAL | 120 | 102 | 100 | |

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used as the indicator to check the degree of consistency, and the degree to which an assessment produces consistent results. The value of Cronbach's alpha for all constructs must be above 0.6 to be acceptable and above 0.7 to be reliable. From the reliability test, the values of Cronbach's alpha of all constructs in this study are reliable for data collection.

Ethical Reasoning has a highly reliable Cronbach's Alpha value at 0.932; Ethical Consideration measurement has Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.687 which is moderately reliable, and Ethical Judgment measurement has a good Cronbach's Alpha value at 0.744. The overall personal ethics measurement in this study is reliable. For ethical climate construct reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.891, which is reliable. The tables below summarized the reliability test on each construct.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for Ethical Reasoning

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| .932 | .934 | 7 |

Table 3: Reliability Statistics for Ethical Consideration

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| .687 | .711 | 5 |

Table 4: Reliability Statistics for Ethical Judgment

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| .744 | .778 | 5 |

Table 5: Reliability Statistics for Ethical Climate

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| .891 | .896 | 10 |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both independent variables in this study (ethical evaluation and ethical climate) are measured simultaneously and the correlation of the variables is tested later. Using a deductive study approach, the excellence stance of ethical pursuit in public relations is tested from empirical data obtained and analyzed from descriptive statistics and then tested using the Pearson Correlation test on Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) 24. The correlation test provides a quantified value that represents the correlation and strength of the association between ethical evaluations and ethical climate by computing different measures of dependencies such as linear and rank correlations. The correlation is visualized in a scatter plot.

Respondents are particularly from those who are actively involved in public relations functions for their respective organizations, which is not limited to one single activity since one practitioner can be involved in multiple activities at a time. The activities that they are involved in are marketing (58), product or brand communication (41), advertising (39), employee communication (36), community relations (35), media relations (34), publicity (33), event management (32), messaging (30), campaign (23), annual and quarterly report (18), public affairs (14), measurement and analysis (12), religious messages balanced with government relations (11 respectively), crisis management (10), and reputation management (8). The distribution of public relations activities the respondents are actively involved in is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency of public relations activity that respondents are actively involved in

| Types of activities | Frequency |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Annual/quarterly report | 18 |
| Campaign | 23 |
| Community relations | 35 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Crisis management | 10 |
| Employee communication | 36 |
| Event management | 32 |
| Government relations | 11 |
| Marketing | 58 |
| Measure/analysis | 12 |
| Media relations | 34 |
| Messaging | 30 |
| Advertising | 39 |
| Product brand communication | 41 |
| Public affairs | 14 |
| Publicity | 33 |
| Religious messages | 11 |
| Reputation management | 8 |

From both descriptive statistics analysis of personal ethics and organizational ethics, this study recorded a bigger score percentage of highly ethical evaluation and ethical climate compared to unethical ones in decision making which exemplify high personal ethics (ethical evaluation) and organizational ethics (ethical climate) among the public relations practitioners in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In an ethically challenging situation or dilemma, practitioners evaluate the situation and make their decisions accordingly. This evaluation process helps them decide the course of action that determines personal ethics based on intention consideration, utilitarian (consequential) and deontological reason, and their judgment.

Pearson Correlation analysis reveals a positive correlation between ethical evaluation and ethical climate at $r=0.314$, $p<0.01$ where r represents the strength of the relationship, and p is the significance level. The positive value of r indicates that in the decision-making process when ethical evaluation is high among practitioners, the ethical climate of their organizations is most likely to be high also which accepts $H2$. This is a positive situation for public relations endeavors to achieve ethical practice and minimize contradictions in an ethical decision, where personal ethics has a positive association with organizational ethics. The positive association increases the predictability of one's ethical evaluation to be corresponding with the organization's ethical climate. The $r=0.314$ indicates a weak correlation since it is closer to 0 than to 1 which agrees with $H3$. The positive, moderately weak correlation is statistically significant at $p<0.01$ which implies that any form of change in the score of one's ethical evaluation, the score of ethical climate is changed as well. The significance value also indicates that the positive, moderately weak correlation result between ethical evaluations and ethical climate is not due to chance, consistent with hypothesis $H1$ in this study. This significance value gives strong confidence for this study to accept $H1$ and conclude that personal ethics should yield a statistically weak, positive correlation with ethical climate since conflicting interests are disrupting the consonance between personal and organizational factors in decision making despite both practitioners and organizations are in pursuit of excellent practice. The analysis results accept all hypotheses. Table 7 shows the correlation matrix between Ethical Evaluation and Ethical Climate.

Table 7: Correlation matrix between Ethical Evaluation and Ethical Climate

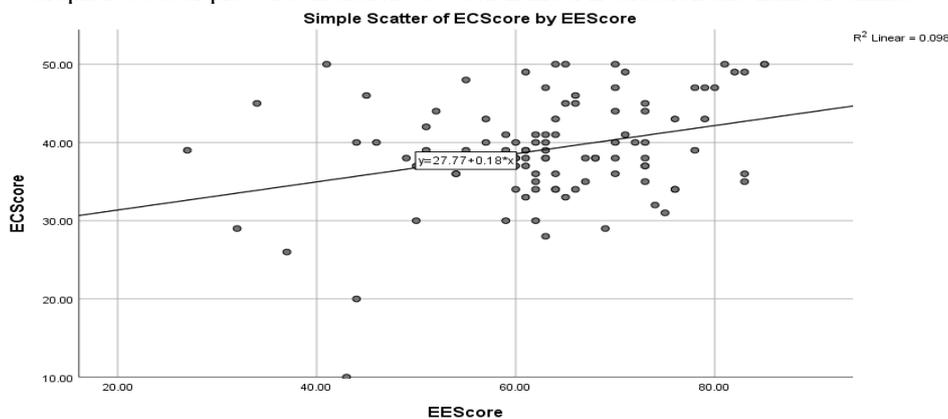
| | | Ethical Evaluation Score | Ethical Climate Score |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ethical Evaluation Score | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .314** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Ethical Climate Score | Pearson Correlation | .314** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

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

Graph 1 below illustrates the statistical correlation between ethical evaluation and ethical climate. Each dot on the scatter plot representing a single data point. The dots distributed spread away from each other and spread apart from the fitted line which indicates a weak correlation. The dots however still have a positive trend that clustered and angled at the top right region of the graph to represent a positive correlation.

Based on the result, this study infers that a given score of personal ethics is related to the score of organizational ethics and vice versa. For example, the practitioners who consider ethical intention will be likely to justify their decision ethically as well as behave ethically in a positive ethical climate. Likewise, a high ethical climate in an organization is likely to have practitioners with high ethical evaluations in decision-making.

Graph 1: Scatter plot of correlation between Ethical Evaluation and Ethical Climat



This positive, moderately weak correlation between ethical evaluation and ethical climate at $r=0.314$, $p<0.01$ are statistically significant and provide an explanatory power concerning the relationship between personal and organizational ethics in decision making using excellence theory. These findings demonstrate that in ethical decision making, the score of ethical climate has a moderately weak but statistically significant positive correlation with ethical evaluation by the practitioners. Therefore, the objective of this study is achieved.

CONCLUSION

The result from Pearson Correlation analysis conveys the direction, strength, and significance of the relationship between variables. In this study, the significantly positive, moderately weak statistical association between ethical evaluation and ethical climate conforms that the score of one's ethical evaluation is only moderately related to the score of the ethical climate and vice versa, which can be implied that unethical elements and conflicting interests still fostered in public relations practice regardless the organization and the practitioners are ethical or not. Nevertheless, a positive correlation agrees with the excellence theory since an ethical organization correlates with ethical practitioners and vice versa. Statistical correlation between one's ethical evaluation and the ethical climate of the organization substantiates the conclusion on how changes on one variable correspond to significant change on the score of another variable. Practitioners still account for their intention consideration, reason, and judgment for their decisions regardless of the state of their ethical environment. In other words, an ethical organization might still instill unethical public relations practice through conflicting with practitioners' ethical evaluation.

The methodology of this study is appropriate to be applied in future studies on a different period, different sample and population, and different discipline pertains to ethical decision making. This study discussed the criteria of an individual's ethical evaluation and how it is positively but moderately associated with organizational ethical climate in decision making among public relations practitioners in the pursuit of excellence in public relations. It is expected that the finding from this study to add to the rich literature of public relations ethics, supports continuous development of ethical communication studies, and eventually helps better research in the future to analyze conflicts and compliance between personal and organizational factors in ethical decision making among public relations practitioners.

This study is limited in terms of duration, sample size, area, theory, and analysis, thus leaves a significant gap for future studies to overcome. Future studies can expand the observation on personal factors in decision making such as accreditation or credential. In addition, future researchers might as well increase the sample size to gain a stronger statistical power. This study also calls for more case studies related to ethics in public relations practice by identifying the mechanism for a pragmatic solution for both the public relations industry and academia, particularly for the future generation of practitioners in training to be aware of ethical decisions that organizations and publics need. For instance, the parameter of organizational ethical climate in this study is solely based on the ten-item measure. The future researcher can improvise by measuring organizational ethics based on the respective organization's established ethics statements, and look deeper into the typology or dimension of ethical climate and standard operation procedure in crisis communication.

When practitioners evaluate ethical situations correspondingly with organization goals, the practice will achieve an ideal situation where the good and the right decisions are beneficial for public relations' effectiveness and efficiency. Otherwise, the dissonance between the intention, reason, and judgment of an individual in an ethical situation will disrupt the ethical evaluation, thus affects the ethical decision in his or her tasks. The contradicting elements between personal and organizational factors in decision making affect the organization-public communications and relations function; which ultimately makes the pursuit of excellence an uphill battle. An ethical practice that pursues effectiveness and efficiency should ideally encourage two-way symmetrical communication with

responsibilities toward the public at all costs. The balance of information control, such as allowing dialogues (Kim & Krishna, 2017), reporting misconducts, and encouraging feedback among the public, the presence of activists or influencers among the public to promote a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its public.

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