

A pilot study on the contribution of public relations colleges towards the fulfillment of public relations industry job-skills requirements in Oman. A case study of Bayan College

Abstract

This pilot study was set to investigate the contribution of public relations colleges towards the fulfillment of the public relations industry job-skills requirements in Oman using Bayan College as a case study.

Using a quantitative exploratory approach, the researchers employed a survey in which questionnaires were distributed to 117 respondents from public relations practitioners, public relations alumni, public relations teaching faculty staff, and public relations continuing students.

The results indicated that to a larger extent, colleges teaching public relations courses and programs are providing students with the right skills required in the public relations industry although the emphasis was put to have more practical courses than theoretical courses.

***Key Words:** Public Relations Universities and Colleges, Public Relations Industry and Job-Skills Requirements*

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is to explore through quantitative approach the extent to which media colleges contribute to the fulfillment of the public relations industry job-skills requirements.

This explorative pilot study uses Bayan College in the Sultanate of Oman as a case study.

The basis of this study is to provide a ground that will be used to conduct a further research which will include other universities and colleges that are teaching public relations in the Sultanate of Oman.

Statement of the problem

The premise of this study is based on the fact that public relations colleges and universities churn out hundreds of graduates every year to provide human resource to the job market, and in this case, public relations industry.

Whether these graduates have the right skills that fulfill the specific job requirements in public relations industry is a matter that warrants investigation. Using a quantitative exploratory approach, the researchers investigated whether colleges teaching public relations courses are producing graduates with the right skills that fulfill the specific public relations job-skills requirements.

Literature Review

In this section, a review of related literature on public relations skills development and education in academic institutions and the public relations industry job skills requirements is conducted in an attempt to explore whether there is a skills match or mismatch between what the public relations academic institutions are producing in their graduates and the public relations industry jobs-skills requirements.

1.1 Public relations education

The history of PR education has often been traced in the US and Canada where in the 1920s the first PR course was introduced at University of Illinois and later a PR program was introduced in 1947 at Boston University in USA (Wright, 2011). According to Wright (2011), Canada had its first PR course in 1948 at McGill while in 1977 Mount Saint Vincent University inaugurated its first PR program in Canada. As PR programs developed and expanded, smaller, second-or third tier institutions adopted PR curriculum that were being offered at US and Canadian universities and college(Wright, 2011).

Over the years, public relations education has become an area of specialization that a number of colleges and universities around the world are considering as part of their teaching programs.

Generally, a number of professions have set educational standards and requirements as one of the benchmarks to job entries. According to Wright, (2011) public relations education which dates back to 60 years often had no proper coordination in linking public relations education standards to professionalism. One of the issues that is worth looking into is the role of professional public relations bodies and institutions in supporting public relations education has contributed directly or indirectly towards the developing of academic public relations skills for the industry. For example Distaso, (2019) notes that the Commission of Public Relations Education which was launched in 1973 has been over the years providing guidance and practitioners on issues of public relations education around the world.

Ingrained in the above background therefore, the focus of this study is to explore whether the colleges and universities teaching public relations programs are producing graduates with the skills that matches the public relations industry job-skills requirements.

2.2 Public relations curriculum development

This study also explores the contribution of stakeholders like professional practitioners in participating towards developing a curriculum that meets the specific skills for public relations industry. As Tod (2009) puts it, initially, there was need for a consensus on what academic institutions were teaching in PR courses and what PR industry job-skills requirements demanded. However after carrying out a survey among senior-career, mid-career and early-career practitioners, Krishna, Write & Kotcher, (2002) reveals that PR academic institutions need to refocus and consider more PR programs such as; course work on listening, digital storytelling and communicating effectively in today's environment of disinformation. Other areas the authors consider are critical include; leadership, how to work effectively with PR firms and consultants, and most importantly have a business acumen.

However it is worth mentioning that Krishna et al (2020) study does not indicate whether their recommendation would be applicable to all contexts including in countries where PR industry is still developing. This study looks at specifically at the Omani context.

In order for public relations academic institutions to teach students with the right skills for the public relations industry, an understanding of exactly what the industry needs are should be put into consideration (Krishna et al, 2020).

According to the Commission on Public Relations Education report (2018),there is a mismatch between public relations graduate skills set and what the public relations industry job-skills requirement.

The Fast Forward: Foundations and Future State. Educators and Practitioner report (2018) pointed out that one of the main skills the PR graduates require for the industry is writing. Other skills the report highlights as necessary include; research, theory, ethics and technology.

Similarly, the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) that was launched in 1955 has been promoting the growth of public relations education in many countries through its Gold paper No.4: “A model for Public Relations Education For Professional Practice”, published in 1982.

In involving the industry professionals, IPRA suggests that there are a number of ways practitioners can weigh in support of PR education for example by embracing PR education and becoming advocates for its development and growth, providing internship opportunities for students, serving on advisory boards of PR academic institutions, and to be part of curriculum development and research.

Another critical area that this study explores is in the criteria of assessing students’ skills for public relations industry job-skills requirements. Stacks, Boston & Turk (1999) for instance point

out that PR practitioners and educators should strive to reconcile a PR curricula and teaching should be aligned to public relations industry practices.

In a survey that looked at faculty and professional advisor's perceptions of public relations curriculum assessment of students learning, it was revealed that professional public relations practitioners preferred more practical experience such as in new media, internships, student preparation for public relations industry job-skills (Tod, 2009). Todd's findings further stressed that public relations professionals should be involved in assessing of students' practical works.

In order to empirically explore the above discussed issues, this study was therefore guided by the main research question on whether there is a match or a mismatch between the skills priorities of colleges teaching public relations programs and the public relations industry job-skills requirements. The main research question was further broken down into the following assumptions and sub-questions;

- Assumption 1: Media and public relations colleges formulate the right curriculum that meets the public relations industry job-skills requirement.
- Sub-question 1: How do public relations colleges formulate the curriculum for public relations studies?
- Assumption 2: The public relations industry has specific job skills requirements
- Sub-question 2: What are the specific job-skills requirement preferred in the public relations industry?
- Assumption 3: The public relations industry has some degree of involvement in the formulation of the academic curriculum for public relations studies.
- Sub-question 3: What is the level of involvement of the public relations industry in formulating the academic curriculum for public relations studies?

- Assumption 4: The teaching faculty staffs prepare students with skills that match the public relations industry job-skills requirements.
- Sub-question 4: How do the teaching faculty staffs prepare their students with skills that match the public relations job market requirements?

Methods

In this study, the researchers used the quantitative research approach with an aim of understanding the cause-effect relationships as often examined from the positivist paradigm perspectives (Creswell, 2003, p.7).

3.1 Sampling

The respondents for the study were drawn from the target population of public relations practitioners, alumni from colleges teaching public relations, public relations faculty/teaching staff and continuing public relations students. The rationale for selecting these target population was to get their perspectives on the research questions directly related to their specific areas of interest. For this pilot study, the researchers applied purposive non probability sampling technique to select 32 public relations practitioners- 12 from the public/government sector and 10 from the private sector while 20 alumni of Bayan College who had completed their studies in the academic years 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 respectively. For the alumni, 5 respondents were selected per each academic year.

On the other hand 15 public relations teaching faculty staff at Bayan College were selected to address among other things the specific PR skills they are offering for their students. The respondents for the continuing students were drawn as follows; 10 from second year finalizing diploma students, 20 from third year bachelor students and 20 from fourth year finalizing bachelor students.

The population characteristics for the public relations practitioners and the alumni were based on age, academic qualification, work experience and career level practice. The population characteristic public relations faculty teaching staff was based on age, academic qualification, work experience and academic rank while the continuing students' population characteristics was based on age, study program and year of program.

The data collection method was mainly through the use a survey in which questionnaires were prepared and distributed electronically to 117 accessible populations.

The process of data collection and data analysis was aided through the use of Smart Survey-UK software.

Survey Distribution:

Survey Respondents	No of Participants
Public Relations Practitioners	32 (12 Public Sector and 10 Private Sector)
Public Relations Alumni	20 AY 2016-2017 : 5 AY 2017-2018 : 5 AY 2018-2019 : 5 AY 2018-2019 : 5
Public Relations Continuing Students	50 2 nd year students: 10

	3 rd year students: 20 4 th year students: 20
Public Relations faculty/teaching staff	15

Purpose of the survey and findings

The objective of this survey is to attempt to establish the contribution of colleges teaching public relations to the fulfilment of public relations industry job-skills requirements in Oman.

In order to achieve the objective of the survey, it is important to capture the Public Relations Practitioners, Alumni, continuing students and public relations faculty teaching staff perspectives and opinions for analysis. This will attempt to create an understanding of the extent to which colleges teaching Public Relations Programs are contributing to the fulfilment of Public Relations Industry job-skills requirements. Analysis of this survey could also result in a recommendation for a revised curriculum for public relations programs in Oman.

Results/Findings and Discussions

The following are the result and discussions of the survey based on the assumptions and the sub-questions of the research;

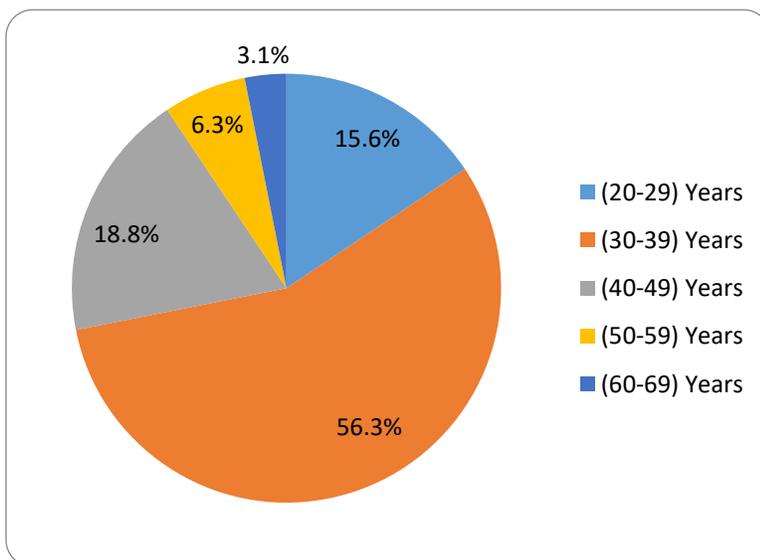
- Assumption 1: Media and public relations colleges formulate the right curriculum that meets the public relations industry job-skills requirement.
- Sub-question 1: How do public relations colleges formulate the curriculum for public relations studies?
- Assumption 2: The public relations industry has specific job skills requirements

- Sub-question 2: What are the specific job-skills requirement preferred in the public relations industry?
- Assumption 3: The public relations industry has some degree of involvement in the formulation of the academic curriculum for public relations studies.
- Sub-question 3: What is the level of involvement of the public relations industry in formulating the academic curriculum for public relations studies?
- Assumption 4: The teaching faculty prepare students with skills that match the public relations industry job-skills requirements.
- Sub-question 4: How do the teaching faculty prepare their students with skills that match the public relations job market requirements?

4.1. Public Relations Practitioners Response

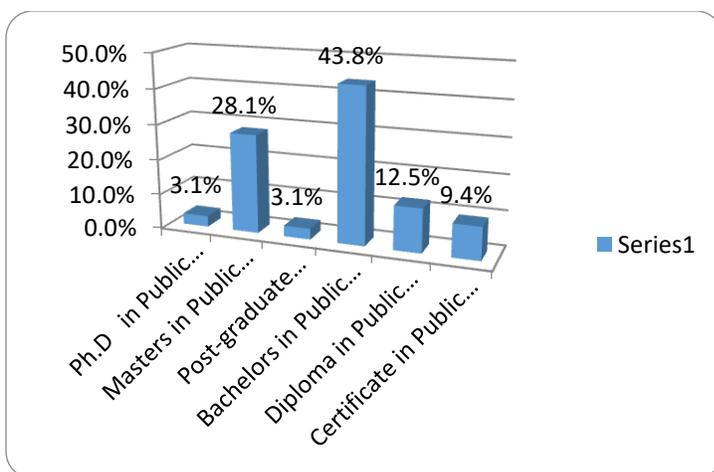
Demographic parameters

4.1.1 Age



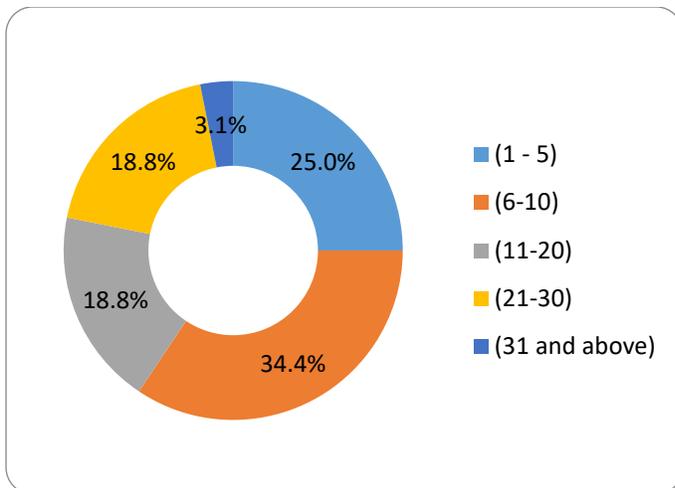
The age distribution was as follows; (20-21) Years (30-39) Years (40-49) Years (50-59) Years (60-69) Years. From the above age distribution 56% of the respondents in this category were between the ages of 30-39 years while 18% were between the ages of 40-49. Those between the ages of 20-29 were 15.6% while those aged between 50-59 were 6.3% and those above 60-69 were 3.1%.

4.1.2. Qualifications



According to the survey those with Bachelors in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields were 43.8% and those with masters were 28.13 % followed by diploma at 12.5%, certificate course at 9.4% and Ph.D. 3.1%.

4.1.3. Work experience in terms of number of years;



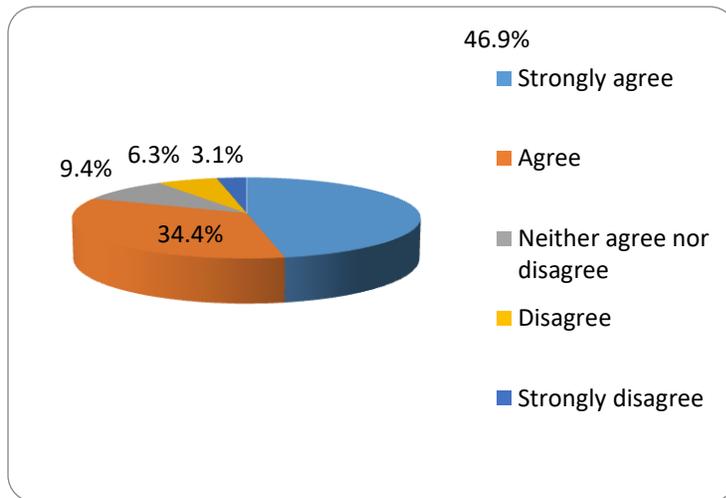
In terms of work experience those within the category of 6-10 years of work experience were 34.4% while those between 1-5 years of work experience were 25.0%. Those with work experience of between 21-30 years and those with work experience of between 11-20 years of work experience were both at 18.8 % while those with 35 years and above of work experience where 3.13%.

4.1.4. Level of practice of public relations;

Sl.No:	Level of practice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Senior-career level	34.4%	11
2	Mid –career level	50.0%	16
3	Junior/Early-career level	15.6%	5

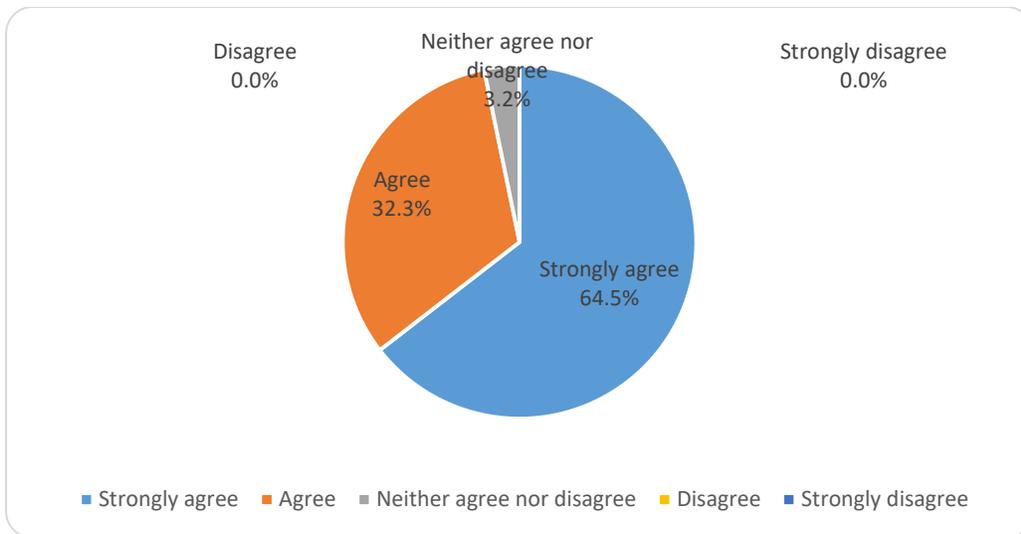
The level of practice of public relations was categorized as senior-career level, mid –career level and junior/early-career level. Among these categories 50% were found to be practicing PR at mid –career level while 34.38% were practicing at Senior-career level and Junior/Early-career level practitioners were at 15.6 %

4.1.5. Colleges teaching public relations programs are producing graduates with the required job-skills relevant to the public relations industry;



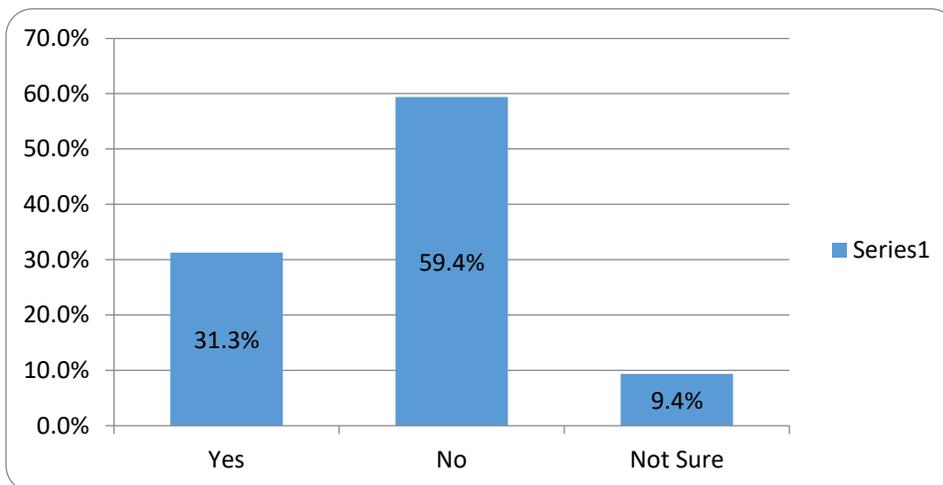
On whether colleges teaching public relations programs were producing graduates with the required job-skills that are relevant to the public relations industry, 46.9% strongly agreed while 34.4% agreed. Those who neither agreed nor disagreed were 9.4% while those who disagreed and strongly disagreed were 6.3% and 3.1% respectively.

4.1.6. Colleges teaching public relations programs should prepare students with more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings;



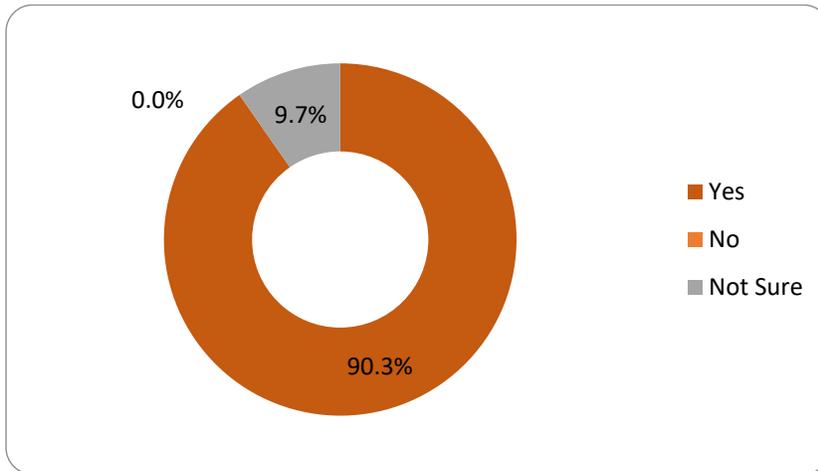
On whether colleges teaching public relations programs should have more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings, 64.5% strongly agreed and 32.3% agreed while 3.2% neither agreed nor disagreed. None of the practitioners strongly disagreed nor disagreed at all.

4.1.7. Are you in anyway involved in public relations curriculum development and research for colleges teaching public relations programs?



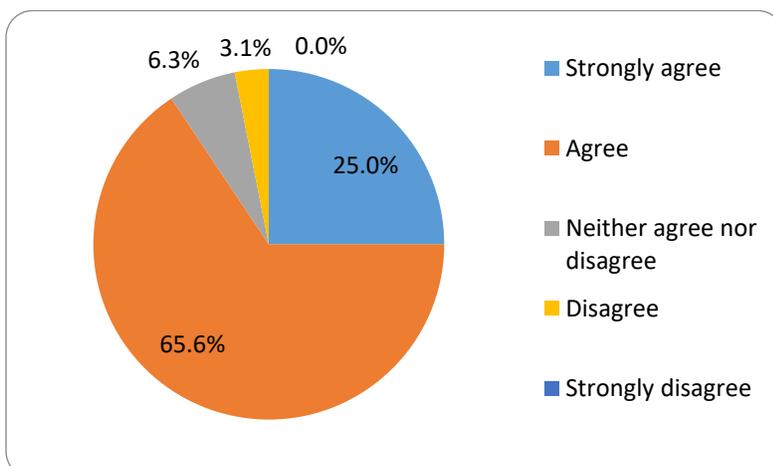
On whether public relations practitioners were involved in public relations curriculum development for colleges teaching public relations programs, 59.4% said they are not involved while 31.3% said they were involved while 9.4% said they were not sure whether they were involved or not.

4.1.8. Would you recommend that PR practitioners should be involved PR education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research?



The majority of PR practitioners (90.32%) said Yes that they would recommend PR practitioners to get involved in PR education activities such as being on advisory boards of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research. On the other hand, none of the practitioners said No (0.00%) while 9.68% were not sure.

4.1.9. PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student's portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects;



On whether PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student’s portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects, 65.6% of the respondents agreed and 25.00% strongly agreed while 6.3% neither agreed nor disagreed. Those who disagreed were 3.13% and none of the respondents strongly disagreed.

4.1.10. In a scale of 1-5, rate the most significant PR skills aspiring public relation students should have;

The following is how the public relations practitioners rated the PR industry job- skills requirement in a scale of 1- 5 with 1 being the highest scale while 5 being the lowest scale;

No.	Skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Effective communication in today’s world of digitization	31.25%	12.50%	18.75%	18.75%	18.75%
2.	Writing, listening and creativity	31.25%	21.88%	12.50%	15.63%	18.75%
3.	PR research/ measurement skills	15.63%	9.38%	50.00%	12.50%	12.50%
4.	Digital story telling	25.00%	12.50%	28.13%	12.50%	21.88%
5.	Corporate communication	34.38%	12.50%	15.63%	21.88%	15.63%
6.	PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns	29.03%	12.90%	22.58%	25.81%	9.68%

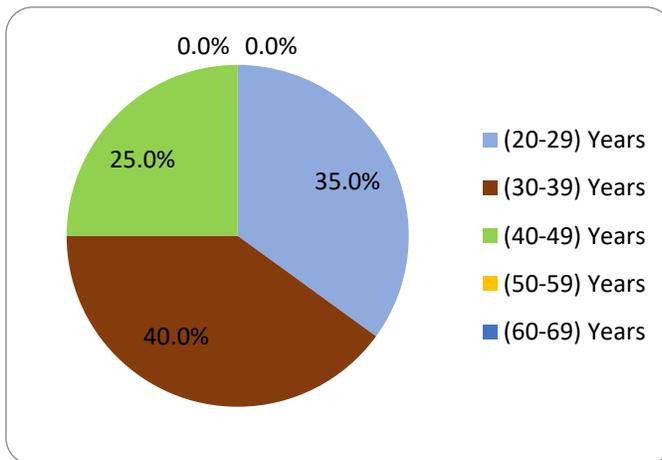
Overall, the public relations practitioners rated Corporate Communication as the most relevant PR industry job-skills requirement at 34.38% while effective communication in today’s world of digitization and writing, listening and creativity were rated as the second most relevant PR

industry job-skills requirement at 31.25%. The practitioners rated PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns at 29.03% while digital story telling was rated at 25.00%. PR research/measurement skills was the least rated skill by practitioner at 15.63%.

4.2. Alumni of Bayan College Response

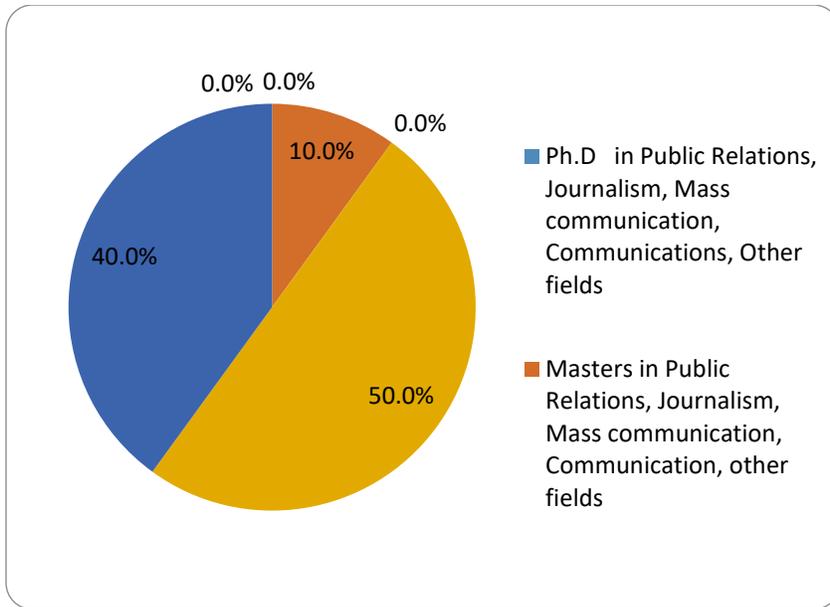
The findings of the demographic characteristics of the Bayan College alumni were as follows;

4.2.1. Age



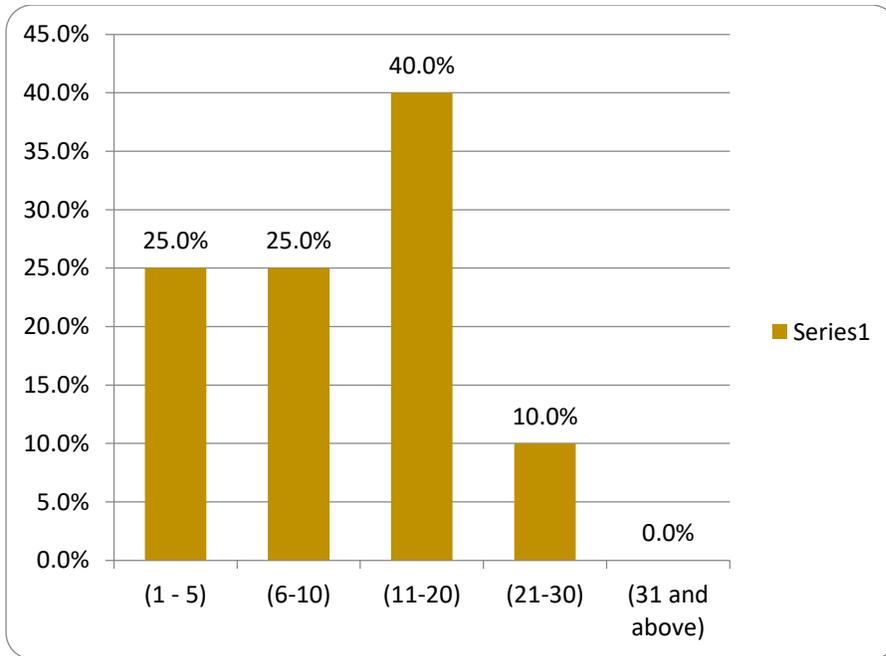
The age distribution of the alumni was as follows; (20-29) Years (30-39) Years (40-49) Years (50-59) Years (60-69) Years. From the above age distribution 40.0% of the respondents in this category were between the ages of 30-39 years while 35% were between the ages of 20-29. Those between the ages of 40-49 were 25.0%.

4.2.2. Qualifications



On the level of qualification of the alumni of Bayan College, 50.00% of the respondents had Bachelor in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication and other fields. The alumni with diploma in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication and other fields were 40.00% while those who hold Masters in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication and other fields were 10.00%.

4.2.3. Work experience in terms of number of years



In terms of work experience, 40.00% of the alumni have work experience of between 11-20 years while 25.00% of the alumni were having between 1-5 years and 6-10 years of work experience respectively. The alumni who have between 21-30 years of work experience were 10.00% while 0.00% of the alumni had worked for 30 years and above.

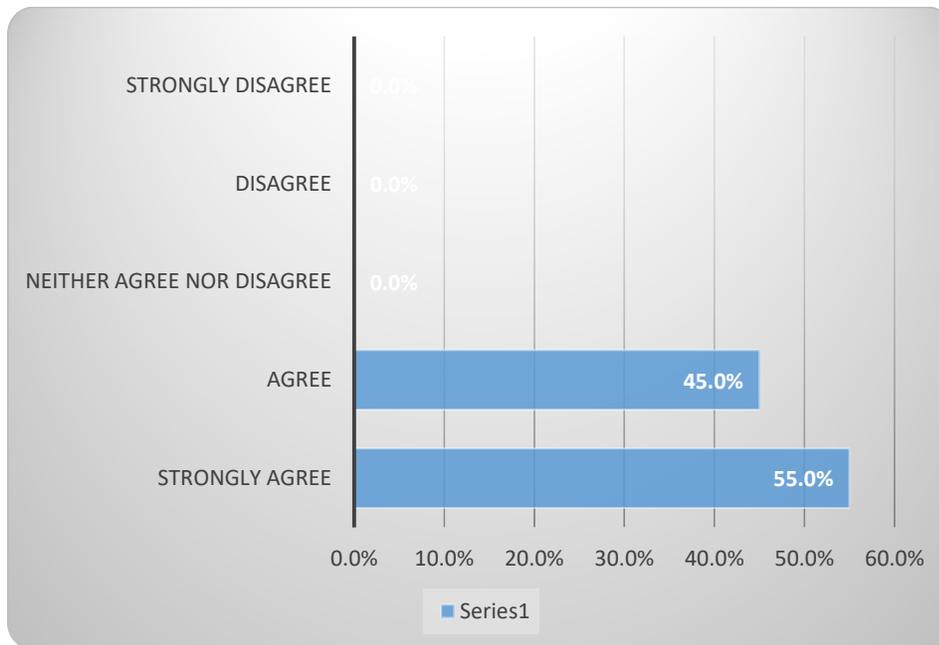
4.2.4. Level of practice of Public Relations

	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Senior-career level	30.0%	6
2	Mid –career level	50.0%	10
3	Junior/Early-career level	20.0%	4

In terms of level of practice, 50.0% of the alumni were practicing public relations at mid-career level while 30.0% were practicing at senior-career level. The alumni who practiced public relations at junior/early-career level were 20.0%

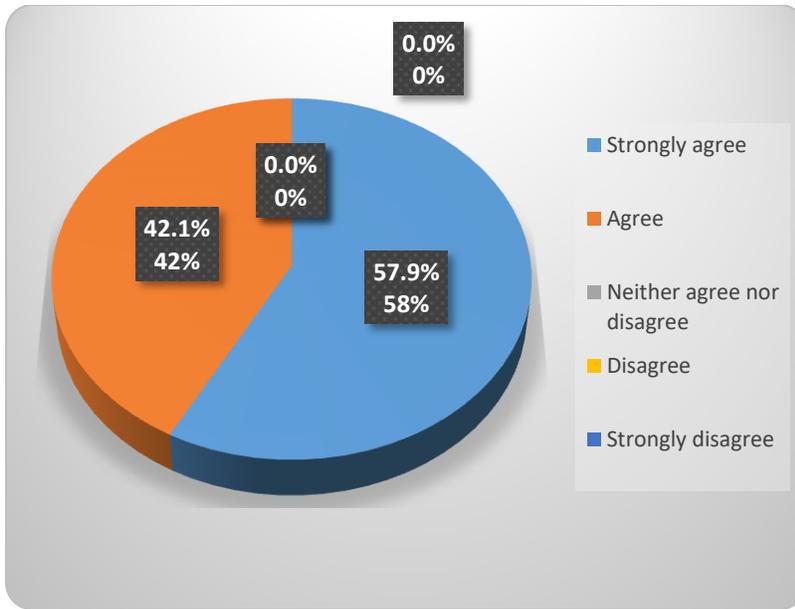
Skills Set

4.2.5. Colleges teaching public relations programs are producing graduates with the required job-skills relevant to the public relations industry;



On whether colleges teaching public relations programs are producing graduates with the required job-skills relevant to the public relations industry, 55.0% strongly agreed and 45.0% agreed.

4.2.6. Colleges teaching public relations programs should prepare students with more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings;



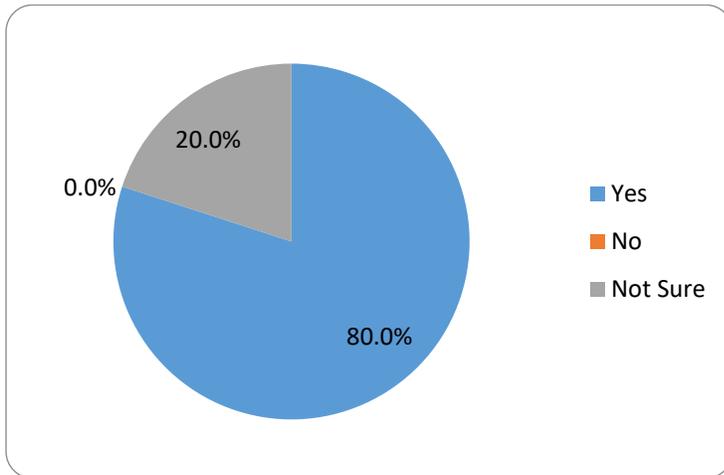
On whether colleges teaching public relations programs should prepare students with more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings, 57.9% strongly agreed while 42.1% agreed. None of the respondents strongly disagreed nor disagreed.

4.2.7. Are you in anyway involved in public relations curriculum development and research for colleges teaching public relations programs?

Sl.No:	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	25.0%	5
2	No	75.0%	15
3	Not Sure	0.0%	0

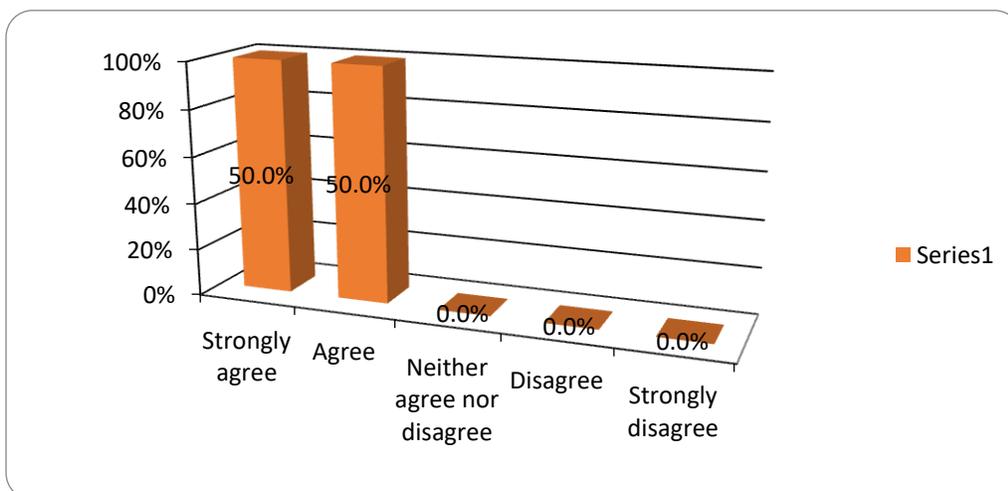
On whether the alumni were in anyway involved in public relations curriculum development and research for colleges teaching public relations programs, 75.0% said no while 25% said yes and 0.0% were not sure

4.2.8. Would you recommend that PR practitioners should be involved PR education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research?



On whether the alumni would recommend that PR practitioners should be involved PR education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research, 80.0% of the respondents said yes and 20.0% said no.

4.2.9. PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student’s portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects;



On whether PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student’s portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects, 50.0% of the alumni strongly agreed while 50.0% agreed.

4.2.10. In a scale of 1-5, rate the most significant PR skills aspiring public relation students should have;

The following is how the alumni rated the PR industry job- skills requirement in a scale of 1- 5 with 1 being the highest scale while 5 being the lowest scale;

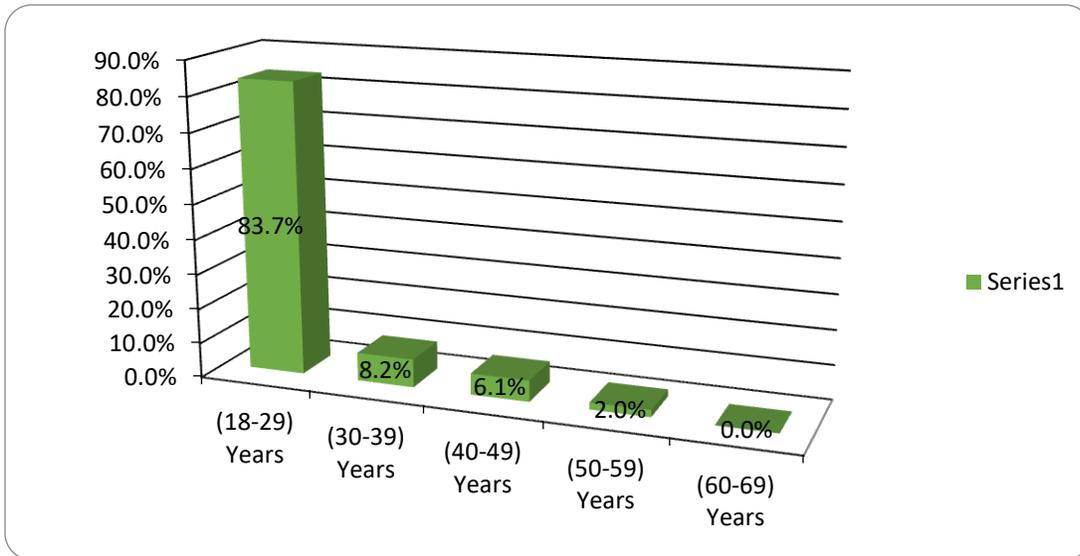
No.	Skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Effective communication in today’s world of digitization	45.00%	35.00%	15.00%	5.00%	0.00%
2.	Writing, listening and creativity	47.00%	36.84%	10.53%	5.26%	0.00%
3.	PR research/ measurement skills	45.00%	25.00%	15.00%	10.00%	5.00%
4.	Digital story telling	57.89%	15.79%	21.05%	0.00%	5.26%
5.	Corporate communication	89.47%	5.26%	0.00%	0.00%	5.26%
6.	PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns	90.00%	10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

The alumni highly rated PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns at 90.00% followed by Corporate Communication at 89.47%. Digital story telling was rated at 57.89% while the writing, listening and creativity were rated at 47.00%. Both Effective communications in today’s digitized world and PR research/measurement skills were rated at 45.00%.

4.3.Continuing Students of Public Relations Response

The demographic characteristics of the continuing students of public relations were as follows;

4.3.1. Age



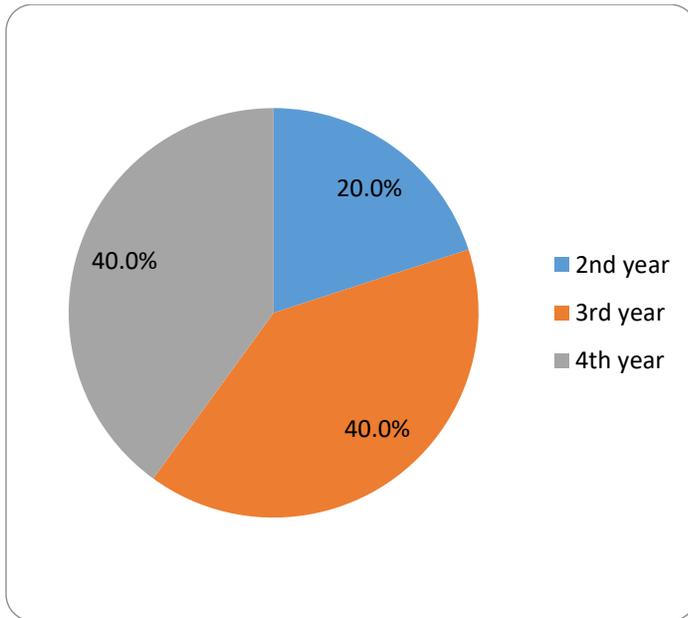
In terms of age distribution of the continuing students, 83.7% were between the ages of 18-29 years while 8.2% were between the ages of 30-39 years. The students who were between the ages of 40-49 were 6.1% while those who were 50-59 years were 2.0%. None of the continuing students were 60 years and above.

4.3.2. Study Program

Sl.No:	Study Program	Response Percent	Response Total
4	Bachelors in Public Relations	80.0%	40
5	Diploma in Public Relations	20.0%	10

Majority of the students 80.0% were offering bachelor program while 20.0% were offering diploma programs.

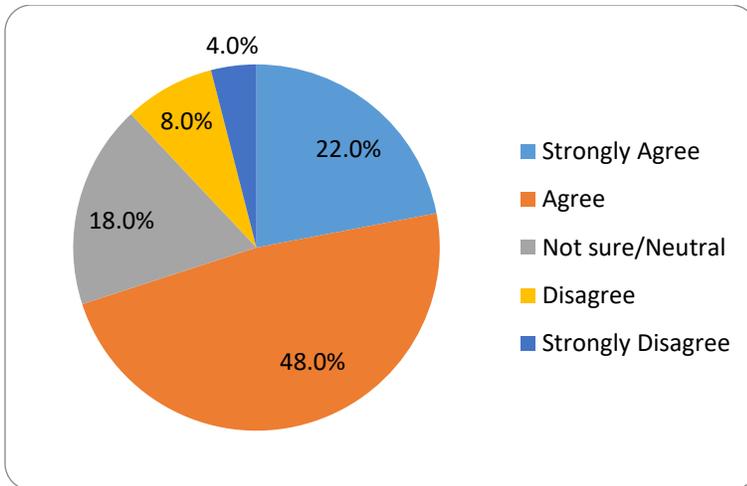
4.3.3. Year of Study



Most of the continuing students 40.0% were in their 4th year (final year of study) and also 40% were in their 3rd year of study. While those in their 2nd year were 20.0% who were diploma students.

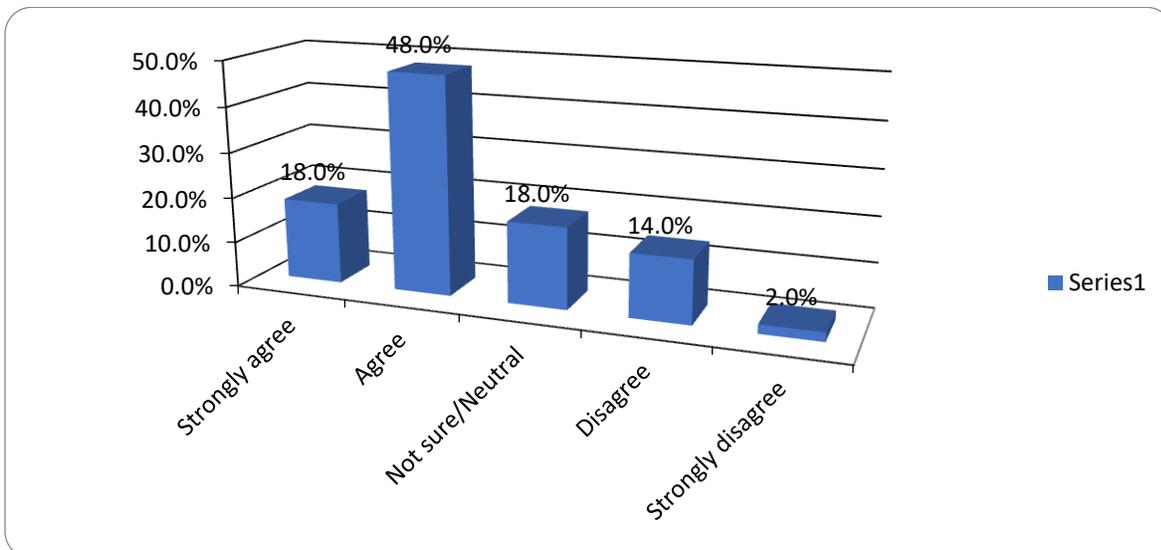
Skills Set

4.3.4. The College is teaching me with the right skills that is required in the public relations industry;



On whether the College is teaching students with the right skills that is required in the public relations industry, 48.0% agreed and 22.0% strongly agreed. The students who were not sure/neutral were 18.0%. Those who disagreed were 8.0% while those who strongly disagreed were 4.0%.

4.3.5. The College is preparing me with more practical experience such as internship, PR related trainings and graduation project;



On whether the college is preparing students with more practical experience such as internship, PR related trainings and graduation project, 48.0% of the students agreed while 18.0% strongly

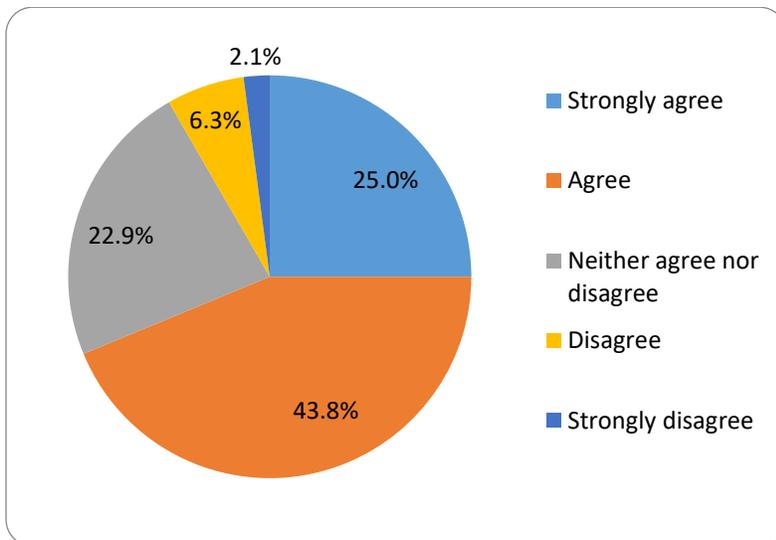
agreed. Those who were not sure/neutral were 18.0%. Students who disagreed were 14.0% while those who strongly disagreed were 2.0%.

4.3.6. Do you think that the skills you are learning while studying public relations at the college are relevant/ important to the public relations industry job skills?

Sl.No:	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	68.0%	34
2	No	10.0%	5
3	Not sure	22.0%	11

On whether students think that the skills they are learning while studying public relations at the college are relevant/ important to the public relations industry job skills, 68.0% said yes while 22.0% were not sure and 10.0% said no.

4.3.7. PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student’s portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects;



On whether PR professional practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student’s portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects, 43.8% of the students agreed while 25.0% strongly agreed. Students who were not sure/neutral were 22.9% while 6.3% of the students disagreed and 2.1% strongly agreed.

4.3.8. In a scale of 1-5, rate the most significant PR skills aspiring public relation students should have;

The following is how continuing public relations students rated the PR industry job- skills requirement in a scale of 1- 5 with 1 being the highest scale while 5 being the lowest scale;

No.	Skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Effective communication in today’s world of digitization	18.00%	16.00%	26.00%	20.00%	20.00%
2.	Writing, listening and creativity	22.92%	8.33%	27.08%	22.92%	18.75%
3.	PR research/ measurement skills	26.53%	10.20%	26.53%	20.41%	16.33%
4.	Digital story telling	18.00%	20.00%	28.00%	16.00%	18.00%
5.	Corporate communication	22.00%	26.00%	10.00%	22.00%	20.00%
6.	PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns	20.00%	18.00%	26.00%	16.00%	20.00%

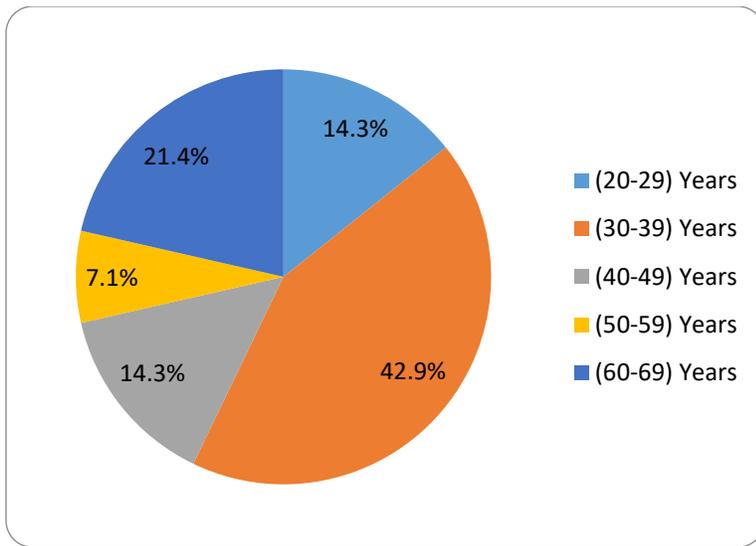
The continuing students rated PR research/measurement skills as the highest at 26.56% while writing, listening and creativity was rated as the second highest with 22.92% followed by Corporate Communication at 22.00%. PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns was

rated by students at 20.00% while both effective communication in today’s world of digitization and digital story telling were least rated at 18.00%

4.4. Survey Among Public Relations Faculty/Teaching Staff Response

4.4.1. Age

The demographic characteristics of the public relations faculty/teaching staff were as follows;



On the age distribution of the public relations teaching staff, 42.9% were in the age bracket of (30-39) years while 21.4% were in the age bracket of (20-29) years. Those in the age brackets of (40-49) and (60-69) were 14.3% respectively. Those who were (50-59) were 7.1%.

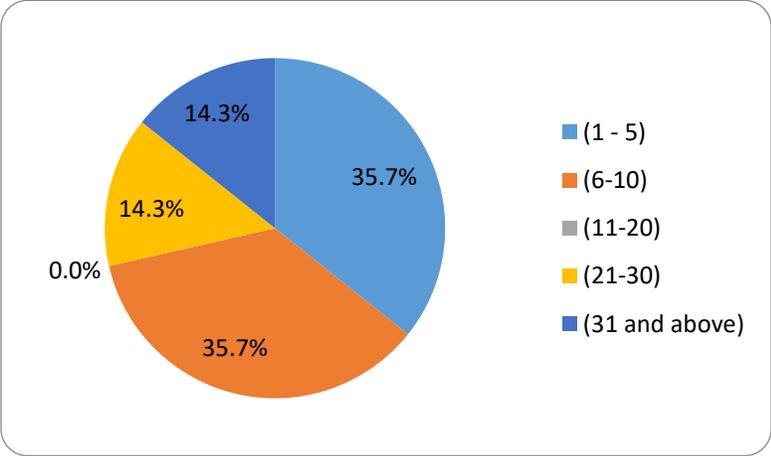
4.4.2. Qualifications

SL.No:	Qualifications	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Ph.D in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communications, Other fields	30.8%	4
2	Master in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields	69.2%	9

3	Post-graduate diploma in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication Communication, other fields	0.0%	0
4	Bachelors in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields	0.0%	0
5	Diploma in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields	0.0%	0
6	Certificate in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields	0.0%	0

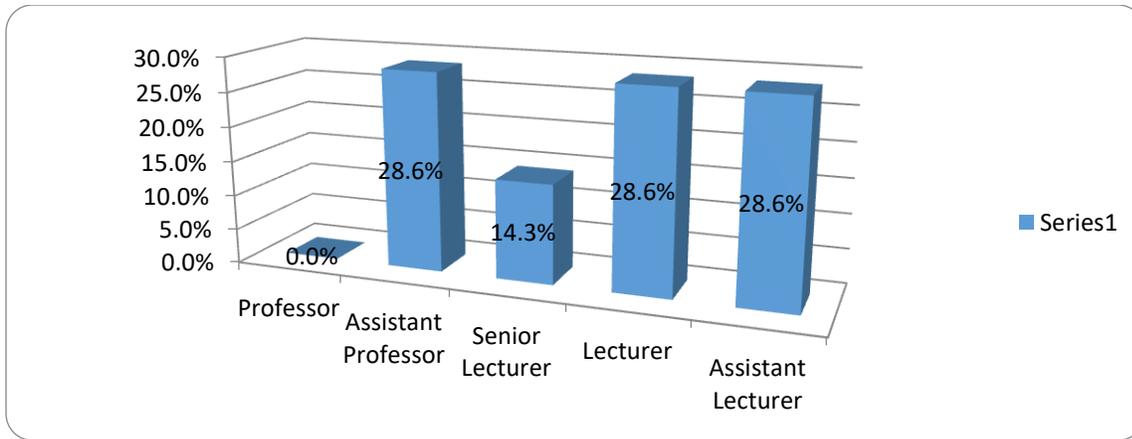
On their qualifications, 69.2% of the teaching faculty staff have Masters in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields while 30.8% had PhD in Public Relations, Journalism, Mass communication, Communication, other fields

4.4.3. Work experience in terms of number of years



On work experience in terms of number of years, those who had worked for 1-5 years and 6-10 years were at 35.7% respectively. The teaching faculty staffs who have worked between 21-30 years were 14.3% while those who had worked for 31 years and above were 14.3%.

4.4.4. Level of Academic Rank



The ranks of the members of the teaching faculty were as follows; 28.6% Assistant Professors, 28.6% Lecturers, 28.6% Assistant Lecturers and 14.3% Senior Lecturers.

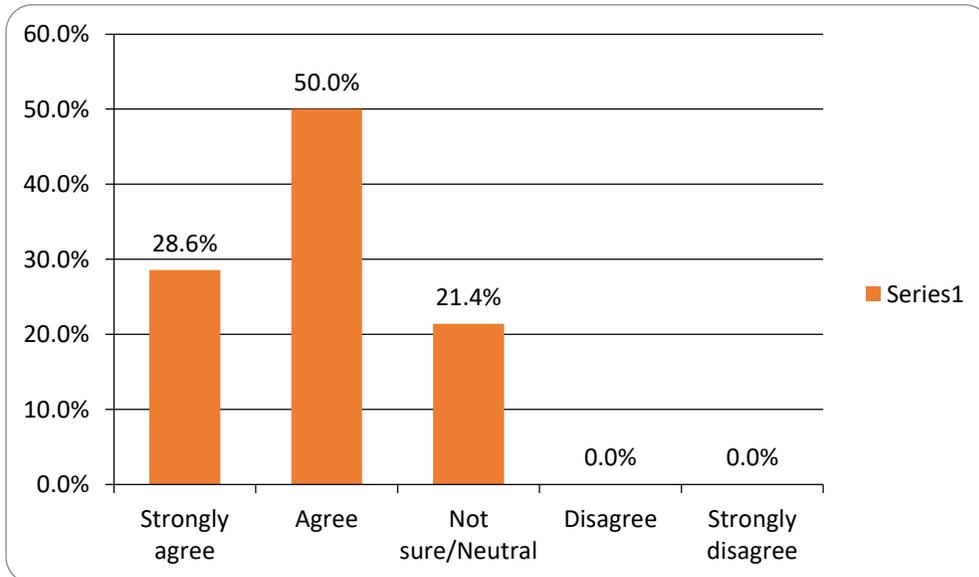
Skills set

4.4.5. Are you teaching students with the required job-skills relevant to the public relations industry?

SL.No:	Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree	23.1%	3
2	Agree	76.9%	10
3	Not Sure/Neutral	0.0%	0
4	Disagree	0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree	0.0%	0

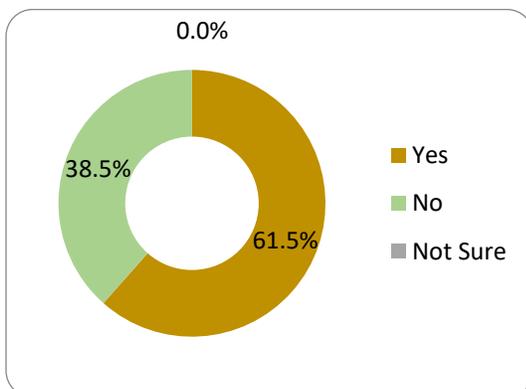
On whether the lecturers were teaching students with the required job-skills relevant to the public relations industry, 76.9% agreed while 23.1% of the teaching staff strongly agreed.

4.4.6. Do your public relations programs prepare students with more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings?



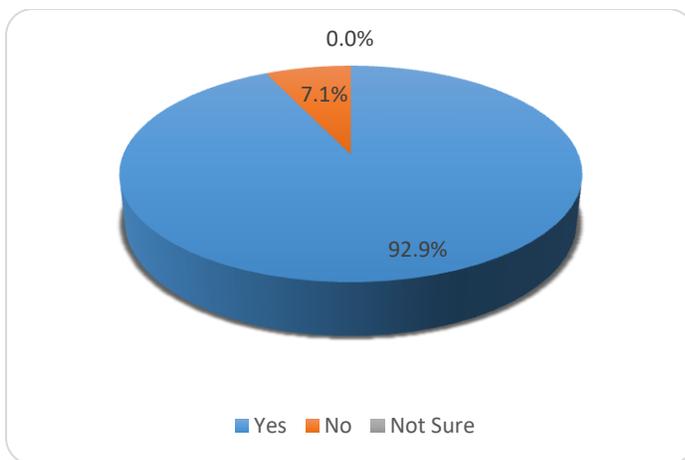
On whether the public relations programs at the college prepare students with more practical experience such as internship and PR related trainings, 50.0% of the respondents agreed while 28.6% strongly agreed. Those who were not sure/neutral were 21.4%

4.4.7. Are you in anyway involved in public relations curriculum development and research for colleges teaching public relations programs?



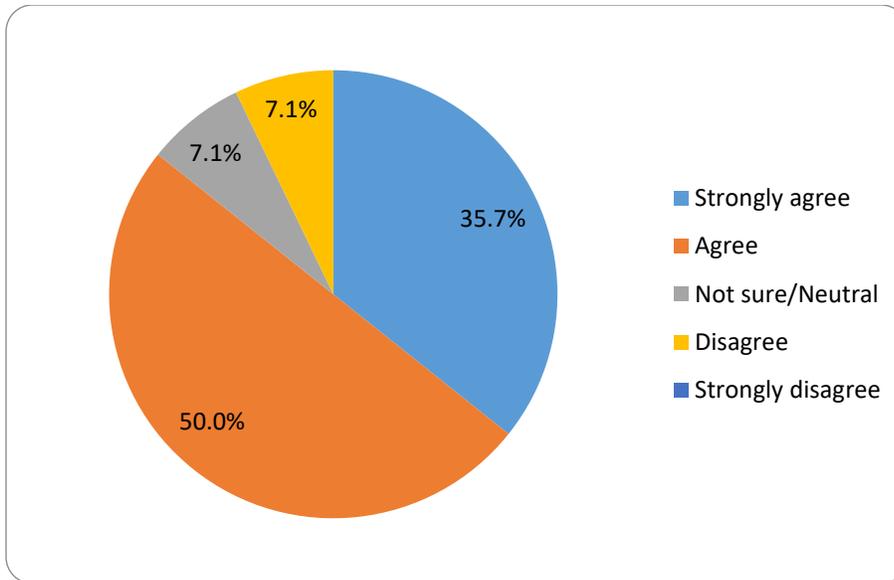
On whether the teaching staffs were in anyway involved in public relations curriculum development and research for colleges teaching public relations programs, 61.5% said yes while 38.5% said no.

4.4.8. Would you recommend that PR practitioners should be involved PR education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research?



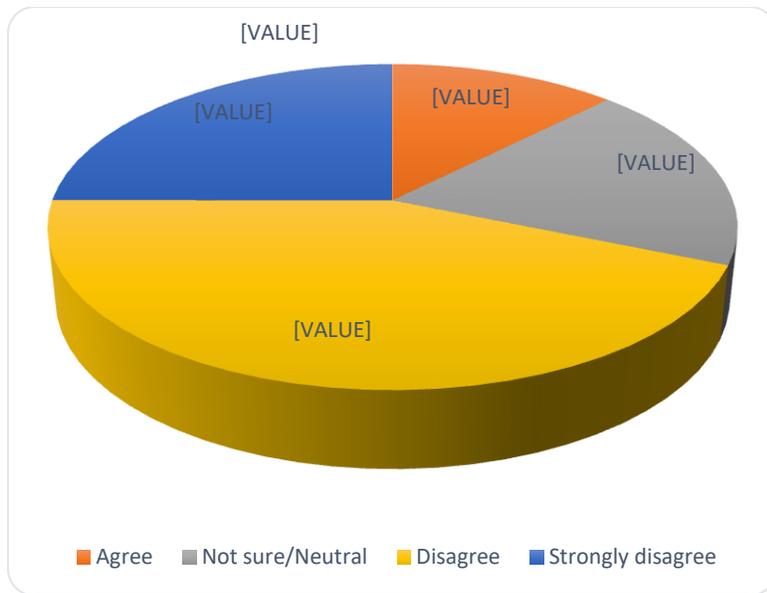
On whether the teaching faculty staffs would recommend that PR practitioners should be involved PR education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research, 92.9% respondents said yes while 7.1% said no.

4.4.9. Do you think professional public relations practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student's portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects;



On whether the teaching faculty staff thought that professional public relations practitioners should be involved in assessing PR students works such as student's portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects, 50.0% agreed while 35.7% strongly agreed. Those who disagreed were 7.1% and those who neither agreed nor disagreed were also 7.1%.

4.4.10. Do you think there is a skills gap between what the PR industry job-skills requirements are, and the skills public relations academic institutions teach their students?



On whether the teaching faculty staffs think that there is a skills gap between what the PR industry job-skills requirements are, and the skills public relations academic institutions teach their students? 26.6% strongly disagreed while 46.6% were disagree. Those who were neutral were 20.0% and those who agreed were also 13.3%. No one strongly agreed the statement that there was a skill gap.

4.4.11. In a scale of 1-5, rate the most significant PR skills aspiring public relation students should have;

The following is how the public relations practitioners rated the PR industry job- skills requirement in a scale of 1- 5 with 1 being the highest scale while 5 being the lowest scale;

No.	Skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Effective communication in today's world of digitization	71.43%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	Writing, listening and creativity	35.71%	28.57%	21.43%	7.14%	7.14%

3.	PR research/ measurement skills	35.71%	28.57%	21.43%	14.29%	0.00%
4.	Digital story telling	42.86%	21.43%	21.43%	14.29%	0.00%
5.	Corporate communication	64.29%	14.29%	7.14%	7.14%	7.14%
6.	PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns	71.43%	21.43%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%

In the skills rating, the teaching faculty staffs rated highly both effective communication in today's world of digitization and PR strategies, tactics and techniques for campaigns at 71.43% followed by skills in Corporate communication at 64.29%. Digital story telling was rated at 42.86% while both PR research/measurement and writing, listening and creativity were rated least at 35.71% respectively.

2. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the Public Relations Practitioners, Alumni, continuing students and public relations faculty/teaching staff perspectives and opinions, the Colleges teaching Public Relations Programs are contributing to the fulfilment of Public Relations Industry job-skills requirements in Oman. As per the outcome of the survey results and findings, majority of the students have strongly agreed or agreed that the College is teaching them with the right skills that is required in the public relations industry and has also agreed that the College is preparing them with more practical experience such as internship, public relations related trainings and graduation project.

At the same time majority of the respondents recommends or agrees that Media and Public Relations Colleges should formulate the right curriculum that meets the public relations industry job-skills requirement by incorporating more practical oriented teaching, with the immersion of

the industry people in the development of the public relations education activities such as being on advisory board of academic institutions or being part of curriculum development and research, also to involve in assessing PR students works such as student's portfolios, final projects in capstone campaign courses as well as graduation projects.

As per the opinions by the respondents the formulation of the curriculum for public relations studies can be improved by updating the curriculum periodically keeping in mind the dynamics of market demand in this fast changing globalized world. Public relations skills change with the change of time, technological developments and means of communication just as they change according to the development of the public relations function. Therefore, universities that study public relations must keep pace with the developments we mentioned and provide outputs that possess scientific, written and practical skills and experiences.

Also quotes that public relations students should be given different sessions with public relations practitioners to enhance the practical skills required for the profession and to provide trainings outside the college for the students to experience the work environment. It would be also good if the students can perform an actual campaign that goes to a national level.

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