

Does Ethics Statement of a Public Relations Firm Make a Difference? Yes it Does!!

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Abstract Attempting to determine solutions for unethical practices in the field, this research was designed to assess the effectiveness of public relations firms' ethics statements in decreasing the incidence of malpractice. This study revealed an encouraging finding that practitioners working in firms with ethical parameters were significantly more likely to engage in ethical practices. Moreover, educating public relations practitioners about the content of ethics statement could positively influence their ethical practices. At the same time, this study's findings suggest further questions for consideration in future scholarship and in the application of ethics statements to practice within the field.

Keywords Ethics code · Ethics statement · Public relations firm

In the field of public relations, unethical practices have been regarded as a serious problem with numerous deleterious effects. Responding to this issue, professional public relations associations, including the Public Relations

Society of America (PRSA) and the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), have launched and mandated the use of ethics codes in the field (Wilcox and Cameron 2006).

While the associations' codes have improved the public's perception of the public relations field and its level of professionalism, both professionals and scholars have been skeptical of the codes' efficacy due to their lack of enforcement (Huang 2001; Wilcox and Cameron 2006). In response to this weakness, scholars have suggested an alternative, contending that individual public relations firms' ethics codes could be more effective than general field-wide codes in preventing unethical practices for a couple reasons (Fisher 2005; Ki and Kim 2009). First, a firm can enforce its own ethics code among its employees, the public relations practitioners. Second, a firm's code is an expression of the core ethical values and principles that firm promises to promote and demonstrate through its practices (Ki and Kim 2009).

With these strengths in mind, scholars have investigated the status of ethics codes in public relations firms. Fisher (2005) identified six categories within the codes—work environment, goals, behavior, professionalism, fulfillment, and respect—as common ethical values. Ki and Kim (2009) found that less than half of public relations firms in U.S. possessed ethics statements. While the aforementioned studies shed light on the status of ethics codes in public relations firms, they do not appear to be based on empirical evidence. Although assumptions regarding the effectiveness of ethics codes in public relations firms exist, these studies have not proven whether these codes effectively encourage ethical practices. Moreover, scholars conducting ethics studies have indicated that there is little empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of ethics codes in influencing practitioners' attitudes and behaviors

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(i.e., Trevino and Nelson 2005). Accordingly, to address this gap, this study will empirically evaluate the impact of ethics codes in public relations firms on their practitioners' ethical practices. To evaluate the impact of ethics codes, this study will assess public relations practitioners' ethical behaviors toward ethically questionable scenarios. Empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of ethics codes provided by this study could ultimately pave the way for more ethical practices in the public relations field.

Literature Review

Studies of Ethics Statements

In the field of ethics studies, terms such as “ethics statement,” “code of conduct,” and “credos,” have been used interchangeably with “code of ethics.” Murphy (2005) distinguished these terms, claiming that “ethics statements” is an inclusive term that includes “values statements,” “corporate credos,” and “ethics codes.” Since, this study is one of the first to empirically evaluate the efficacy of ethics parameters set forth by public relations firms, the inclusive term “ethics statements” was adopted and defined as “ethical parameters designed by a public relations firm to guide and examine the ethical and professional norms among its public relations professionals.”

Ethics studies that have focused on firms' ethics statements can be divided into two categories—(1) those examining the prevalence of ethics statements and their common values across firms and (2) those evaluating the codes' effectiveness. Falling into the second category, this study investigates the efficacy of public relations firms' ethics statements.

Code Prevalence and Common Values

According to the first category of studies examining the prevalence of ethics statements (Chonko et al. 2003; Kaptein 2004), the majority of firms worldwide have established their own ethics statements. For example, in U.S., about 90% of firms now have an ethics statement to guide practitioners' practice in the firm (Chonko et al. 2003), and some even provide multiple forms of statements (Murphy 2005). Globally, about 60% of the 100 largest companies have introduced ethics statements (Kaptein 2004).

Effectiveness of Ethics Statements

For over two decades, scholars have debated the effectiveness of ethics statements in deterring unethical practices. One group of scholars have doubted the efficacy

of ethics statements in reducing the frequency of unethical practices (e.g., Akaah and Riordan 1989; Allen and Davis 1993; Callan 1992; Chonko and Hunt 1985; Cleek and Leonard 1998; DeGeorge 1990; Ford et al. 1982; Higgs-Kleyn and Kapelianis 1999; Matthews 1987; Sims and Keon 1999). For example, Sims and Keon (1999) contended that the existence of an ethics statement did not effectively influence ethical decision-making. From their perspective, ethics statements are worth not more than the pieces of paper on which they are written.

On the other hand, another group has claimed that ethics statements are indeed influential in discouraging unethical behavior (e.g., Adam and Rachman-Moore 2004; Chonko et al. 2003; Fisher 2001; McCabe et al. 1996; Pierce and Henry 1996; O'Dwyer and Madden 2006; Schwartz 2001; Somers 2001; Vitell and Hidalgo 2006). For example, Adam and Rachman-Moore (2004) discovered that the presence of an ethics statement in a firm positively affects practitioners' perceptions of ethical behaviors. Weaver et al. (1999) presented evidence indicating that ethics statements have strategic benefits and positively influence long-term performance by discouraging inappropriate decisions. Moreover, scholars have claimed that companies derive several direct and indirect benefits by having ethics codes, such as (1) improvement of the company's bottom line (Leeper 1996; Werner 1992), (2) protection during litigation or regulatory actions (White and Montgomery 1980), (3) promotion of corporate social responsibility, positive employee behavior, management, and corporate culture (Robin et al. 1989), and (4) creation of a positive impression of a firm among its stakeholders (Berenbein 1988; Cressey and Moore 1983).

Effects of Ethics Statements on Ethical Behavior

Rest (1986) proposed a theoretical framework indicating that moral decision-making involves the following four basic components or steps: (1) identifying the moral nature of an issue, (2) making a moral judgment, (3) establishing moral intent, and (4) engaging in moral action. Ethics studies have widely applied this framework, confirming its usefulness (O'Fallon and Butterfield 2005). As demonstrated by the framework, influencing employees' ethical behavior through the establishment of ethical behavioral expectations is a primary motivation for a firm to develop an ethics statement (Dean 1992). Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the impacts of ethics statements on ethical behaviors.

While many studies have examined ethics statements of firms in the business field, research examining ethics statements in public relations firms remains at the incipient stage. As Bowen (2007) indicated, the public relations field has relied heavily on ethics codes established by

professional associations. Consequently, scholars have also paid greater attention to these professional codes as opposed to examining individual firms' ethics codes. For example, Fitzpatrick (2002a) analyzed the evolution of the PRSA code and its enforcement over a 50-year historical period. In another study, Fitzpatrick (2002b) provided the development procedures for a new PRSA ethics code and offered an insider perspective on the ethics initiative.

As previously mentioned, evidence addressing the effects of ethics statements on encouraging ethical behavior remains sketchy and mixed. Establishing more empirical evidence on the efficacy of ethics codes could help to better determine their true effects. More important, by far, is the fact that none of the studies have examined the effectiveness of public relations firms' ethics statements for discouraging unethical practices. The outcome of this study would therefore be beneficial in guiding the future direction of ethics in public relations practices.

Ethics of Public Relations in Korea

As in the U.S., public relations associations in Korea have established ethics codes to discourage unethical practices. For example, the Korea Public Relations Association (KPRSA),¹ an association similar to PRSA in U.S., launched a 10-item Code of Ethics² in 1999. The code addresses three main areas, including public interest, client service, and cooperation with other practitioners (Shin and Cha 2000). Another association, the Korea Public Relations Consultancy Association (KPRCA),³ an association similar to The Public Relations Consultants Association in the United Kingdom, was founded in 2000 in an effort to prevent practitioners from conducting illegitimate practices (Kim 2003). The KPRCA's membership consists of 17 leading public relations firms in Korea, which are guided by the KPRCA's 13-item ethics code. The code addresses client service, media publicity, cooperation between agencies, and the appropriate notification procedure for an employee planning to leave his/her current job to go work for another agency.

No previous research has examined the impact of ethics statements on public relations professionals' ethical

practices in the field. Moreover, as most public relations ethics studies have been conducted in Western countries (e.g., Bivins 1992, 1993; Bowen 2004a, b, 2005; Fitzpatrick 1996, 2002a; Fitzpatrick and Gauthier 2001; Fitzpatrick and Palenchar 2006; Huang 2001), collecting and analyzing empirical evidence from South Korea fills a gap in the literature.

Based on the exploratory nature of this study, the following research question was suggested.

Research Question Does an ethics statement of a Korean public relations firm have a significant impact on the ethical behaviors of its public relations professionals?

Method

Data Collection

Population and Samples

Practitioners working at public relations firms in Korea comprised the population of this study. As this study specifically examines the efficacy of ethics codes in guiding public relations practices, it excluded practitioners working at in-house public relations departments, because in many cases, larger corporations may possess ethics codes that generally apply to all employees rather than providing field-specific codes for their public relations departments. Currently, there is no complete directory of Korean public relations practitioners available. Consequently, this study utilized the list of public relations firms with membership in the KPRCA and contacted practitioners at those firms. Twenty-eight CEOs among the 31 firms listed as members of the KPRCA were contacted to request their cooperation in this research.⁴ The CEOs were provided with a brief description of the study and its purpose through personalized communication, including phone calls, emails, and face-to-face meetings.

Among the CEOs contacted, 19 expressed interest in the research and agreed to encourage their employees to participate in the survey. Of the 19 firms⁵ that participated in the research, four organizations had 51–100 employees, 13 organizations had 30–50, and two organizations had 10–30. Practitioners working in firms where the CEOs agreed to encourage employee participation were chosen for the survey, and the CEOs and researchers informed the selected practitioners about the research and associated survey.

¹ KPRSA was established in 1989 to foster the professional standards of public relations practitioners and develop public relations theories and skills through public relations education and training programs. This association has served as a bridge between industry and the academy.

² More detailed information regarding the KPRSA Code of Ethics can be found at <http://www.koreapr.org/about/ethics02.php>.

³ Seventeen major public relations firms in Korea established the KPRCA in 2000 to raise public awareness and trust of the public relations field and to boost the ability and spirit of those contributing to the development of the Korean public relations industry.

⁴ Three of the CEOs could not be reached at the time this research was conducted.

⁵ The CEOs did not participate in the survey. The results of the survey solely reflect the responses of the participants, employees from the participating public relations firms.

To guarantee the anonymity of the participants and ensure voluntary participation, each questionnaire was inserted into an envelope. This measure was taken to ensure that the CEOs and the researchers had no knowledge of who had or had not participated. Though all practitioners chosen for the survey received the questionnaire, participation was completely voluntary.

The only qualification for participation in the study was employment in a professional career in the public relations industry at the time the survey was conducted. As practitioners occupied various positions and possessed different levels of experience in the field, their responses provided diverse viewpoints that helped to create a comprehensive overview of their opinions for the current research.

Questionnaire Development Procedures

The survey procedure consisted of three stages—two preliminary tests and a main survey. The entire survey procedure was conducted over a two-month period in Korea.

Two Pretests

Before the primary data collection, this study conducted two pilot tests to ascertain the quality of the questionnaire. Eight senior level public relations professionals were invited to comment on the original questionnaire, which was then revised based on their feedback. The second pretest, which was administered to 30 respondents, tested the revised version of the questionnaire for clarity and face validity.

Main Data Collection

This study utilized the method of personal delivery and collection of a self-administered questionnaire. This method was chosen in favor of other survey techniques, because the questionnaire for this research solicited public relations practitioners' ethical stances in a complex manner. Evaluating personal delivery and collection methods, Lovelock et al. (1976) concluded that this method is the most effective approach for use with lengthy questionnaires. They added that personal delivery by trained researchers appears to yield higher response rates than mail surveys at competitive costs.

The researchers visited CEOs and asked them to distribute questionnaires to their employees. Three days after their initial visits, the researchers followed up to collect the answered questionnaires from the CEOs. Of the 470 practitioners who received questionnaires, 249 chose to participate, resulting in a 53% response rate. Among those 249 questionnaires returned, 30 showed response set and

were therefore excluded, leaving a sample of 219 participant questionnaires for data analysis.

Measures

The Status of Ethics Statements

To evaluate the status of the ethics statement in a public relations firm, this study considered the following two areas adopted from Schwartz (2005): the existence of an ethics statement and education regarding the statement. For the analysis, ethics statement existence and existence of education about an ethics statement were coded as dummy variables (no = 0 and yes = 1).

Ethical Behavioral Intention

To evaluate public relations practitioners' behaviors surrounding ethics, this study used four scenarios as suggested in previous ethics studies (e.g., DeConinck and Good 1989; Stone 1991). Each scenario presents a situation that arises when a practitioner feels pressure to take actions that are inconsistent with what s/he feels to be right. This study used four scenarios originally developed by Pratt et al. (1994). These scenarios were chosen for a couple reasons. First, the scenarios were developed using rigorous procedures based on a review of standard practices guided by the three public relations professional associations—PRSA, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and IPRA (Pratt et al. 1994)—and also applied relevant ethics studies (DeConinck and Good 1989). After the scenarios were formulated, the researchers solicited public relations practitioners' comments and ideas in response to the scenarios at a PRSA chapter meeting. These scenarios were tested and determined to be reliable and valid measures of practitioners' ethical behaviors (See the original scenarios in Pratt et al. 1994). Second, the scenarios reflected realistic ethical dilemmas to which the PRSA code of ethics can be applied, including issues involving the "free flow of information" and "conflict of interest." The scenarios are also valuable because they focus on situations to which absolute moral rules could be applied (Pratt et al. 1994).

To ensure validity, two native Korean speakers translated the scenarios from English into Korean and adjusted the situations to fit appropriately into the Korean public relations work environment. For example, American names and position titles for the scenario characters were replaced with Korean names and titles to render each scenario more realistic. Practitioners' comments and ideas regarding public relations ethics gathered during the two pretest procedures further guided the phraseology of the scenarios (See Appendices 1 and 2 for English and Korean versions of the scenarios). To check reliability, the Korean version

of the scenarios was also translated back to English. To measure the intention of practitioners, the following statement was presented: “I would do just what X⁶ did.” Participants recorded their responses for each scenario based on the following four-point scale: (1) definitely yes, (2) maybe yes, (3) maybe no, and (4) definitely no. Reliability of the measurement item was calculated at 0.87, which is higher than acceptable for research purposes, as Nunnally (1978) suggested. This variable was reverse coded so that a higher score indicates greater ethical behavioral intention. Analysis utilized mean scores of participant responses to the four scenarios.

Demographic Variables

Participants answered demographic questions about their gender, age, education level, employment position, and years of public relations experience. These demographic variables were added to the analysis to check the effect of personal characteristics on ethical behaviors. Gender was coded as a dummy variable (Male = 0, Female = 0). For other demographic variables, higher numbers indicate higher values.

Results

Respondents' Profiles

Among the 219 participants, 203 responded to the demographic questions. The gender composition of the participant population was skewed toward females (female ($n = 151$, 74.4%) over males ($n = 52$, 25.6%)).⁷ Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 56 with a mean age of 30 years ($SD = 5.72$). More than 80% of the practitioners reported that they had less than 5 years experience in public relations, with an average of approximately 4.14 years in the field among the sample. Practitioners possessed the following levels of education: high school diploma ($n = 5$, 2.5%), college degree ($n = 149$, 73.4%), and graduate degree ($n = 49$, 24.1%). About 40% ($n = 82$) of practitioners indicated that they worked at the management level, while approximately 60% ($n = 120$) worked as non-management staff.⁸

⁶ X reflects the name of a public relations practitioner described in each scenario.

⁷ Demographic information for public relations practitioners in Korea is currently not available. Therefore, this study could not compare the demographic information of this sample with the entire population in the field.

⁸ In response to the demographic question regarding position, 202 participants answered. Therefore, $N = 202$.

The Status of Ethics Statements in Korean Public Relations Firms

Among the 219 practitioners, less than half ($n = 105$, 47.9%) indicated that their firm presented parameters to guide ethical public relations practices.⁹ The remaining practitioners ($n = 114$, 52.0%) reported that they were unaware of the existence of explicit ethical standards in their firms. The practitioners from firms with ethics statements were asked if their firm required employees to acknowledge receiving a copy of the ethics statement. Of the 94¹⁰ practitioners who indicated working at a firm with an ethics statement, the majority reported that their firm required employees to acknowledge receiving the firm's ethics statement ($n = 57$, 60.6%).

Researchers conducted additional analysis to determine the relationship between the existence of an ethics statement in a firm and the organization's size and age. First, a t test was performed to compare the ages of two categories of firms—those with and those without ethics statements ($t = 5.354$, $p = 000$). The firms with ethics statements were significantly older than those without ethics statements ($M = 15$ years old vs. $M = 10.5$ years old, respectively). Second, a t test was performed to determine if there is a relationship between firm size and the existence of an ethics statement. No significant difference was found in the number of employees between firms with and without ethics statements.

Impact of Ethics Statement on Ethical Behavior

To answer the research question addressing whether an ethics statement in a Korean public relations firm has a significant impact on ethical behaviors of public relations professionals, this study employed regression analysis. The effects of the existence of an ethics statement and education about the ethics statement were tested simultaneously along with participants' demographic variables through regression analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Prior to regression analysis, correlation analysis was run to determine the relationships among variables used in this

⁹ As this study relied on survey participants' responses, it might be possible that different participants within the same firm could provide varying responses. Specifically, one participant in a firm could be aware of the existence of an ethics statement within that firm, but another employee may not. However, a code is rendered meaningless to an employee unaware of its existence.

¹⁰ Among the 105 participants who indicated that their firms have ethics statements, 11 did not answer the question dealing with education about the ethics statement. Therefore, $N = 94$ for this question.

study. Among the variables, existence of ethics statement, age, employment position, education about the ethics statement, and participants' length of public relations experience were significantly associated with ethical practice, as displayed in Table 1. However, gender and level of participants' education were not found to be associated with ethical practice.

Regression Analysis

To identify the most influential variables on ethical practice, this study used step-wise regression analysis. The total variance accounted for in the regression analysis was 14%, and the analysis was highly significant in terms of F values ($F = 1.861$, $p = 0.006$) as displayed in Table 2. Of the variables tested in the regression analysis, existence of an ethics statement ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$) and education about the statement ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$) were determined to be significant. However, none of the demographic variables tested—age, education level, gender, employment position, and length of public relations experience—were determined to be significant. Therefore, the results of the regression analysis suggested that practitioners working in a firm with an ethics statement and who had also learned about the contents of the ethics statement were more likely to engage in more ethical practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

Attempting to determine solutions for unethical practices in the field, this research was designed to assess the effectiveness of public relations firms' ethics statements in decreasing the incidence of malpractice. This study revealed an encouraging finding that practitioners working in firms with ethical parameters were significantly more likely to engage in ethical practices. Moreover, educating public relations practitioners about the content of ethics statement could positively influence their ethical practices.

Table 2 Regression analysis

Independent variable	Ethical practice (β)
Existence of ethics statement	0.32**
Education about the statement	0.25*
Age	–
Education	–
Gender	–
Position	–
PR experience	–
R^2	0.142
F	1.861
Prob. $> F$	0.006

At the same time, this study's findings suggest further questions for consideration in future scholarship and in the application of ethics statements to practice within the field.

The majority of Korean public relations practitioners who participated in this study indicated that ethical parameters did not exist in their firms. The prevalence of ethical parameters in Korean public relations firms is similar to that of firms in the U.S. Ki and Kim (2009) studied the existence of ethics statements in public relations firms in the U.S. and found that more than 60% of the firms did not possess ethical parameters or ethical codes to guide their public relations practitioners' behavior. While more empirical evidence is needed to confirm the efficacy of establishing ethics statements in public relations firms for the reduction of malpractice in the field, this study's findings point positively to its effect. Moreover, Fitzpatrick (1996) specified that the public relations field should adopt a leadership role in the promotion of ethical behavior. Given that more than half of the Korean public relations firms that participated in this study did not possess formalized ethical parameters, more firms should consider creating an ethics statement as a guideline for public relations practices as a first step of an action for promoting ethical behavior among their public relations practitioners.

Table 1 Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Ethical behavior	–							
2. Code existence	0.28***	–						
3. Age	–0.12*	0.06	–					
4. Current position	0.11*	0.15**	0.03	–				
5. Gender	0.02	–0.09	–0.05	–0.43***	–			
6. Education	–0.06	0.12*	0.02	0.08	–0.16**	–		
7. Code education	0.21**	–0.13	–0.22**	–0.13	0.15	–0.03	–	
8. PR experience	0.13**	0.19**	0.05	0.64***	–0.26***	0.08	–0.10	–

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p = 0.000$ (pair-wise deletion was used for missing variables)

The research question considered whether Korean public relations firms' ethics statements significantly influenced the ethical behaviors of their public relations professionals. Findings indicate that among the variables tested in this study, the existence of an ethics statement in a firm has the most powerful effect on ethical practice. This result indicates that practitioners working in a firm with an ethics statement are more likely to engage in ethical practice than their counterparts working in firms without ethics statements. As a number of previous business ethics studies have found (e.g., Adam and Rachman-Moore 2004; Chonko et al. 2003; O'Dwyer and Madden 2006; Schwartz 2001; Somers 2001; Trevino and Weaver 2003; Vitell and Hidalgo 2006), an organization's ethics statement seems to inspire more ethical practices among its employees as compared to the behavior of practitioners working in firms without ethics statements. This finding may imply that public relations firms with ethics statements also tend to encourage their employees to apply the statements' guidelines to their practice and ethical decision-making. Given the apparent effect of having an ethics statement as a predictor of public relations practitioners' behaviors, it would be desirable for all firms to develop such statements. However, the mere existence of an ethics statement by itself cannot be expected to effectively deter unethical practices in public relations firms.

Second, this study indicates that educating employees about ethics statements is another factor effective for improving ethical behavior. In other words, practitioners who learn about the ethics statements in their firms are more likely to participate in ethical practices. As emphasized in several studies (Dean 1992; Sims 1991; Valentine and Barnett 2003), these findings confirmed the importance of employees' awareness and familiarity with ethics statements in influencing their ethical behaviors. Of the firms in this study that had their own ethics statements, more than half educated their employees about the statements' importance and contents. Such educational efforts could translate into greater efficacy of the ethics statements among practitioners. While regression analysis did not display any significant impact of demographic variables on ethical practices, correlation analysis showed that age is negatively associated with ethical practice. That is, younger practitioners are more likely to engage in unethical practices. Keeping this relationship in mind, an 'On the Job Training' (OJT) program for new and junior practitioners involving training in ethical practices in the field could be both practical and beneficial. Currently, most OJT programs in Korean public relations firms focus on technical and functional skills, such as writing news releases, presentations, and production of other public relations materials, but education regarding ethical practices receives little attention. As Enright et al. (1983) suggested, an ethical educational

program needs to be longer than 4 weeks in length in order to be effective. With the increased importance of ethical practices in the field along with the findings from this study, public relations firms should strongly consider developing and implementing ethics statements and educating practitioners about the importance of these statements, particularly through OJT programs for less experienced professionals lasting at least a month.

Consistent with previous studies, this research found that none of the demographic variables tested—age (e.g., Larkin 2000), employment position (e.g., Cohen et al. 2001; Karcher 1996), gender (e.g., Fleischman and Valentine 2003), education (Karcher 1996), length of experience (Roozen et al. 2001)—had a statistically significant impact on ethical practice. However, these insignificant findings were findings in themselves, indicating that these variables may not be related to ethical practices in public relations and therefore need not be of direct concern to employers looking to hire more ethical candidates as public relations practitioners. Instead, firms interested in promoting ethical practices among new employees would do better to consider establishing a formal ethics statement and educating employees about this statement.

This study is the first empirical attempt to investigate the efficacy of public relations firms' ethics statements in influencing practitioners' ethical practices. In response to Wright's (1989) call for more empirical research addressing the topic of ethics, this study provides additional empirical evidence regarding the impact of ethics statements and education regarding their content. An encouraging finding presented by study is that practitioners in public relations firms with ethics statements were significantly more reluctant to participate in unethical practices than those who worked in firms without ethical parameters. The problem of unethical practices in the public relations field is not simple, and no single action will successfully resolve this issue. However, the research reported here provides evidence that the existence of ethical parameters in individual public relations firms could play a positive role in the solution.

Limitations and Future Research Agendas

Like any other research, this study demonstrates several limitations that can guide future research agendas. First, the results and proposed implications of the current research were based on a non-probability sample from several public relations firms in Korea. Consequently, the findings of this study should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. Second, as the researchers who originally developed the four scenarios have acknowledged, the situations presented are limited in scope to PRSA and IABC ethics codes. As such, future researchers should consider

developing more diverse scenarios for testing practitioners' attitudes and behaviors surrounding ethics.

Hopefully, this study draws greater attention to the role of ethics statements in public relations firms across countries, and more research of this type should be conducted in an effort to expand the body of knowledge in the public relations field.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethically Suspicious Scenarios (English Version)

Scenario 1

John is developing a promotion for a housing development his company is about to start. The development is located in a low area that was flooded recently. Consequently, John's company did some work to reduce the danger of flooding. However, if flooding occurs, some of the homes may have some water in their yards. John's company has no plans for additional work to reduce the possibility of flooding. John did not include in his promotion any information on the possibility of flooding.

Q: I would do just what John did.

Scenario 2

Laura is a senior account executive in the Public Relations Division of a leading advertising agency. Several months ago her division signed a major account. Recently, the client called to request an update on the account. Laura informed the client that the execution of the account had been delayed because the production department had been "bogged down."

Fact: The account had been set aside in the meantime in preference for a newer, higher billing, and higher profile account. Laura believes that telling the client the truth could place her agency in an awkward position with client—and perhaps jeopardize all future business.

Q: I would do just what Laura did.

Scenario 3

Bob recently completed multi-thousand-dollar evaluation research on a corporate image promotion he had completed recently. Results indicated that the promotion did not produce the expected gains in corporate image. Bob's agency had been counting on those results for a continuation of its business relationship with the client.

Your research department said that the statistics "tell the truth" and that Bob was obligated to use them in his executive summary. Bob said, "No way. The numbers could be self-destructive." He said that the numbers were only known in-house, and to use them now would "cost the agency big bucks and put us in an awkward position with our client." In his report to the client, Bob used older, more flattering statistics from a previous survey, while awaiting the results of the next evaluation study.

Q: I would do just what Bob did.

Scenario 4

Frank, a senior public relations manager, was staying overnight on a business trip. He went into the hotel lounge to have a drink. He found himself seated next to another public relations manager from his leading competitor. The public relations manager, who appeared to have had several drinks, was in a talkative mood. He talked about his clients and divulged confidential information to Frank. Frank happened to handle the account of a competitive brand.

Frank did not identify himself and instead bought the other executive several more drinks, thinking that if he could not hold his liquor it was his problem. Frank received valuable confidential information about the competitor's new advertising campaign, marketing strategies, and other information that could sharply increase the profits of his own client.

Q: I would do just what Frank did.

Appendix 2: Ethically Suspicious Scenarios (Korean Version)

Scenario 1

김대리는 주거 단지 개발 관련 홍보 기획을 하고 있다. 그 단지개발 사업은 최근에 홍수피해가 있었던 저지대에 계획되어 있고, 김대리의 회사는 홍수의 위험을 줄일 수 있는 최소한의 대비만을 해 놓은 상태다. 하지만 아직도 홍수가 일어나면 몇몇 가옥들은 물에 잠길 수 있고, 회사는 홍수 피해를 줄일 수 있는 추가적인 계획은 세우지 않고 있다. 이런 상황에서 김대리는 그의 기획 안에서 홍수의 가능성에 대한 정보는 배제한 채 홍보를 진행시키려 하고 있다.

Q: 나라도 김대리와 같이 했을 거다.

Scenario 2

이 과장은 대형 홍보회사 AE다. 수개월전 그녀의 부서는 주요 클라이언트와 계약을 맺었고, 최근 그 클라이언

언트는 현재의 상황분석 보고를 요구했다. 하지만 이 과장은 의뢰인에게 회사의 여건 상 인력의 한계가 있어서 컨설팅이 지연되고 있다고 말했다.

실제: 사실 이 과장의 부서는 다른 좀더 수입료가 높은 큰 클라이언트 때문에 보고를 요청한 의뢰인에 대한 작업은 제쳐두고 있었다. 이 과장은 그 의뢰인에게 이 상황에 대해 의뢰인에게 사실대로 말하면 회사의 신용이 떨어져 곤란한 지경에 빠질 수 있으며, 앞으로의 사업에도 나쁜 영향을 줄 수 있다고 생각했다.

Q: 나도 이 과장처럼 했을 것이다.

Scenario 3

박 부장은 최근에 자신이 수행했었던 한 기업의 홍보 캠페인에 대한 효과측정에 대한 조사를 끝마치고 수 백만 원을 받았다. 박 부장의 조사 결과 그가 수행했던 이미지 프로모션 작업은 기대했던 효과를 거두지 못한 것으로 나타났다. 박 부장의 회사는 조사결과도 의뢰인과의 비즈니스 관계의 하나라고 생각했고, 회사 조사부서는 박 부장에게 통계 결과를 사실대로 보고내용에 포함시키라고 지시했다. 하지만, 박 부장은 결과를 그대로 보고 하는 것은 회사에 나쁜 영향을 줄 수 있다고 생각했다. 그는 자신의 회사에 많은 비용을 들인 의뢰인에게 아무런 효과를 거두지 못한 것을 사실대로 말한다면 그 의뢰인과의 비즈니스관계는 악화될 것이라고 생각했다. 그래서 박 부장은 좀더 호의적인 결과가 나왔던 이전 조사결과를 그의 보고에서 이용하였다.

Q: 나도 박 부장이 한대로 했을 거다.

Scenario 4

PR 매니저인 김 과장은 지역 출장 중에 술이나 한잔 할까 하고 호텔 라운지로 갔다. 그런데 거기서 경쟁회사의 PR 매니저의 옆자리에 앉게 되었다. 그 PR 매니저는 술을 먹고 어느 정도 거나하게 취해있었고 이것저것 그의 고객과 회사의 영업 기밀 등을 김 과장에게 이야기했다. 마침 김 과장은 그가 말하고 있는 회사의 경쟁 회사를 담당하고 있었다. 김 과장은 그에게 자신이 담당하는 고객사에 대해 알려주지 않았고 오히려 술을 몇잔 더 사주었다. 그렇게 해서 김 과장은 경쟁사의 새로운 광고 캠페인에 대한 기밀 사항을 더 들을 수 있었다. 그가 제공한 정보들은 김 과장이 대행하고 있는 고객사에게는 엄청난 이익을 줄 수 있는 정보들이었다.

Q: 나도 김 과장처럼 했을 것이다.

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