The Concept of Joking Relationship in Gambian Public Relations Practice

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Abstract—The paper pitched the joking relationship concept as a practical or strategic tool for use by PR practitioners in their quest to establishing effective relationships between the organisation they represent and their stakeholders through a fitting engagement that results to effective communication. The paper further advances joking relationship as an African model for strengthening existing norms for business and societal profit. The paper engaged mix method approach to data collection. First solicited information through face-to-face interview and open-ended questions. Secondly, using the information obtained from the qualitative approach, questionnaires were developed to seek information from wider participants to enable to address the research questions and the hypothesis. The paper concludes based on results that joking relationship concept is quite appropriate tool or approach for use by PR practitioners in their pursuit of creating effective mutual relationship through negotiations, mediations and in problem solving situations. The use of proposed joking relationship themes is contingent upon stakeholders engaged and under given circumstances to produce sustain outcomes. Soft-joking relationship themes preferred over hard-joking relationship themes. This is the first paper that proposes a strong explanation for joking relationship, as a strategic tool for public relations practice for relationship building. The study numerates the essence of joking relationship concept in relations to the perspective of management. This concept paper is a pure academic endeavour with practical applications.

Keywords—joking relationship, public relations, The Gambia

I. INTRODUCTION

Public relations practitioner become effective when his engagements helps to create value to the organisation [1]. The primary goal of public relations practitioner is to create effective mutual relationships as a consequence of organisation-stakeholder interaction. Joking relationships is an effective approach for engagement as it is deeply rooted in Gambia, ritualised in society and in all the activities that requires and enhances the social interpretation of people. Joking relationship according to Radcliffe–Brown [2] is the "*relations between persons in which one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn take no offence*". In a context, joking relationship create both symmetrical and asymmetrical situations. Public relations according to Grunig & Hunt [3] uses the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models in their orientation to engaging the organisation's key stakeholders. Both public relations and joking relationships have commonality and appear fitting to complement each other in any relational engagement.

Public relations involve planning and problem solving [3]. Joking relationship is a key tool for conflict resolution and problem solving which existed since the advent of history. Joking relationship culture has been enshrined as a social institution that reinforces inter-ethnic integration and mitigates inter-group conflict [4,5]. Joking relationship in The Gambia takes different forms which is unique among practicing nations of joking relationships. Gambians value relationship and joking relationship is a unique web for social integration and harmony. Joking relationship concept in The Gambia has been a great catalyst in enhancing the social relationship among the different people. In the Gambian social relationship context, wealth is also calibrated based on the individual's network or the number of people one knows. The old adage in Mandinka "*Balafa Belongole Bala*" meaning "*sympathy is given to or gain through people connected to you*" signifies the important of personal relationship as a saving for favour giving or granting. The study established whether; (i) Joking relationship can be used as public relations approach to establishing effective relationship, (ii) Joking relationships is beneficial to society and business. Joking relationship has capability to establish what is called **solid relationship**, relationship in which parties are ready to defend for sustainability. Joking relationship on the other hand can lead to **soft relationship**, a relationship that is passive in nature and parties are not fully committed to but have nothing to lose if they fail to comply.

II. LITERATURE

Relationships are created to give value to the parties involved. Exchange and communal relationships sometimes referred to as asymmetrical and symmetrical are the most predominant as far as public relations is concern. Joking relationship therefore stands alone but incorporate the features

of both exchange and communal relationship as well as asymmetrical and symmetrical doctrines.

Public relations make the organisation effective, when it identifies the most strategic stakeholders as part of strategic management processes, conducts communication plans, to develop, create and maintain effective long-term relationship between the organisation and the stakeholders [1]. The most productive relationships in the long run are those that benefit both parties in a relationship rather that designed to only benefit the organisation. Public relations theorists termed these types of relationships as symmetrical and asymmetrical. Joking relationship, in one of its relations is symmetrical, where each of the two persons teases or makes fun of the other. In another aspect, its relation is asymmetrical; A jokes at the expense of B, who accepts the teasing good humouredly without retaliating [2]. Public relations like joking relationship relies on effective communication to create that understanding that leads to control to serve diverse interest.

The four models of public relations were developed based on the behavioural observation and engagement of the public relations practitioners. These models include; press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. The two most important among the models are the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models [3].

The two-way asymmetrical model used persuasive and manipulation strategy. It is used as an imbalanced effect in favour of the organisation. The two-way symmetrical promotes mutual understanding with a balanced effect. It creates a dialogic situation instead of monologue situation. The two-way symmetrical model acts as mediator between the organisation and its stakeholders in order to reach mutual understanding. Symmetrical PR has been criticized for being too over ambitious, the symmetrical concept relates to 'equilibrium, social harmony, equality, mutual good will or ideal communication situation. Joking relationship as a concept is also related to create equilibrium in society, create alliances and collaboration among the people [3].

According to Schoenberger-Orgad [6], cultural studies scholar identified 'five moments' as in the process of communication- regulation, production, consumption, representation and identity. These processes work in concert to provide a shared cultural space in which meaning is created, shaped, modified and recreated. Each of the components works with others to create articulations which in turns contribute to the social constructions of meaning and understanding for the parties. Regulation looks at the particular controls of social and cultural institutions involved in the establishment of meaning and to determine whether it is acceptable. For public relations practitioners to use joking relationship concept in their engagement means that maintaining the legitimacy of such social practice and norm, would help to enhance the reputation of the organisation as it recognises social rules of engagement.

Two-way symmetrical model in which the organisation use two-way dialogue, bargaining, negotiation and strategies of conflict resolution with a public in which the perspectives of all parties are voiced and heard to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both the organisation and its stakeholders [3]. Accordingly conceptualized the idea of symmetry of PR as a movement beyond the advocacy of self-interest without concern for the consequences of an organisation's behaviour toward others, to balance between self-interest and concern for others. PR professional therefore have to focus on a broader professional perspective of balancing organisational and stakeholder interest.

According to Jones [7], joking relationship is often described as a 'contract or pact', it is based on shared cultural histories and links people from specific families, ethnic group and caste. People recognise joking relationship by their last names or region of origin. From a brief joke with a new acquaintance to a lengthy joking session with an old friend, provides people with a way to make and strengthen relationships. According to De Jong [4] and Bellagamba [8] "*people used joking relationship to promote social cohesion, circumvent power structures, provide opportunities for economic gain, social standing and preserve cultural histories and identities in a rapidly changing environment*".

According to Jones [7] joking relationship practice is more than jokes as it is a long-term cultural practice stabilize society and create social harmony. Individuals in a joking relationship must constantly choose to enact and utilize it in different ways depending upon the people involved and the situation. Joking relationship is a long-term cultural practice that people use to negotiate for many practical reasons. Joking relationship helps and allows people to negotiate relationship for basic and specific needs [4,5,9]

Joking relationship can be used as an ice breaker in a dull situation and mostly to invoked or create attention. Joking relationship can help players to have the ability to drastically change situations to take on a different significance in a tight environment, especially in ways that allows strangers to establish an instant bonding. The most important fact of joking relationship is to create the 'impression of commonality or camaraderie'. Joking relationship is an informal social relationship created based on the rules and norms of society. History tells us that joking relationship is established as a form of a social covenant in order to enhance coexistence among different diverse people in a given community. To others joking relationship were created among the practicing people who were once engaged in rivalry and fights as a peace token in order to give peace and tranquility to rain and never again to bloodshed [4,5,10]

The informal nature of joking relationship is still a fact in The Gambia and heavily practiced and alive in organisational settings meant to enhance the integration of the diverse people at work. Joking relationship as a concept has been in practice in The Gambia for many hundreds of years. The existence of joking relationship predated public relations as an old practice, but the rise of public relations to prominence is due to the influence of western scholars. Most Gambian societies are

heterogeneous, with a mixed of different ethnic groups. In the traditional Gambian social setting, the blacksmiths and Cobblers played the role of PR in serving as the mouthpiece, negotiators, and announcers of information. The black smithery group is highly respected not only as the manufacturers of farm implement, weapons for hunting and war but they also played the role of traditional initiators. During the trade of barter, many regions in the Gambia engages with others in exchanges of goods and services with those they have a joking relationship. The most common regions include; Foni and Nuimi, Baddibu and Kiang, Nuimi and Jarra, Serahules and people of Baddibu does trade through barter for the fact that they have special affinities to each other [8].

Joking relationship in The Gambia is the single most factor defining peace, growth and steady nature of our societies. This relationship knows no boundary and exists vertically, horizontally, diagonally and criss-cross as a character of social cohesion. Joking relationship is a tool used by Gambian communicators in their approach to overcome the problems of misunderstanding. Significance of joking alliance in conflict management is obvious during an extended study of societal pattern of dispute mediation. It has quickly become apparent that, joking relations were a prominent part of Senegambia conflict management [4,11].

Joking kinship in Gambian mediation strategy illuminates broad divide between the Gambian and western modalities of conflict resolution and indicate that dominant trends in western mediation are not culture specific. These posed both problems and possibilities for the export of Gambian style for further development of conflict resolution theories and methodologies. The communalistic approach to social institutions of Gambians imbues joking bonds with an affective power valuable for potential mediations [11]. Joking relationship is recognised to creating a positive atmosphere; hence communication is effective if it can lead to understanding and control.

The use of joking relationship by the PR practitioner can increase social capital. Social capital, which is defined as the structure of individual's contacts, networks, pattern of interconnections among the various people with whom each person is tied to in a relation. Social capital exists in the relationship between and among person and extends the more that position one occupies in the social network constitutes a valuable resource [12,13].

PR practitioner use of the joking relationship can strengthen his relational capital. Relational capital as a marketing concept spins around the relationship which employees make with internal and external stakeholders. According to Cabrita & Bontis [14] relational capital is key creating value and adds to enhance the organisational functioning through sustained relationships.

Joking relationship is an old relational concept that is reflective of the ideas of the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory to is central in understanding workplace behaviour. Organisations are social entities and people (employees) are the basic ingredient that defines that social relationship, cohesion founded on the grounds of mutualism for all to benefit [15]. According to Blau [16], social exchange is premise on interactions that generate obligations, and Emerson [17], the engagements and interactions are interdependent nature mostly dependent on the actions of the other party. Social exchange theory emphasised interdependent transactions that have potentials to generate high-quality relationship and under certain circumstances moderated by organisation's leadership.

The basic argument of the social exchange theory is that, a genuine relationship evolves over time and into trusting, loyalty, control mutuality and commitment. Parties to the relationship must abide by certain *"rules" of engagement*. The norms of engagement is defined, adopted and practiced by the participants in an engaged relation either asymmetrical or symmetrical in nature [17]. According to Blau [16], social exchange is the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others. The key theme is that, the exchange of social and material resource is a fundamental catalyst to any form of human interaction. Social exchange is anchored on reciprocity and parties willing to become vulnerable to the actions of another the party with the expectation parties in an agreement will perform a particular action important to generate trust and sustained relationship. Settoon and Bennet [18], the importance trust is paramount in exchange relationship and joking relationship as a relationship doctrine rooted in society for long is sustained based on the principles of trust.

Reciprocity is a core foundation of exchange theory, reciprocity or repayment in kind is probably the best-known exchange rules in social exchange theory. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell [15], there is ambiguity in the way in which reciprocity is defined. The primary measure is dependent on individual benefit outline the nature of reciprocity as a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges based on beliefs and moral norms of society.

Reciprocity as a "folk belief" involves the cultural expectation that people get what they deserve [19]. Reciprocity as a norm and individual orientation has also been considered from a cultural perspective in which those who do not comply are punished and frown upon. The key difference between a norm and a folk belief is that norms involves quality and sometimes conditioning [20]. A norm is a standard that describes how one should behave, and those who follow these norms are obligated to behave reciprocity. The norm of reciprocity is a universal principle and a view shared by many in different parts of the world based on what define their context.

The continued existence of Joking relationships as a cultural norm defies critics for its historical relevance to the people of the Gambia. Individuals must choose, enact and utilize joking alliance in ways depending upon the people involved and the situation. Joking relationship is a cultural practice, people negotiate and use for practical reasons. Joking

relationship in its entirety portray positive values for society and people, thus, the public relations practitioner can make use of joking concept to help strengthen his position as an effective professional by creating effective relationship as joking relationship creates unbreakable bonds. Joking relationship is functional to society, business and people. All the tribes in the Gambia are involved in a joking relationship except Akus and Manjagoes who are late comers into Gambian history [11]. Joking relationship is called differently by each tribe; Sanawyaa/ Dankuuto (Mandinka), Kejelorak (Jola), Sanawyagal (Fula), Im maasir (Serere), Kal (Wollof).

A. Conceptual Development

Joking relationship as a concept is first propagated by scholars in anthropology and sociology and strong similarities to concepts of organisational behaviour, a theoretical phenomenon that explains the roots of behaviour in the organisation from individual, group and organisation perspectives. Like joking relationship, organisational behaviour also borrowed ideas from both anthropology and sociology in explaining organisational behavioural context. Therefore, joking relationship as a concept is fitting as a management concept from the perspective of group dynamics, culture, diversity and relationship. Notwithstanding, this paper identifies social identity, social exchange, needs for affiliation (achievement motivation theory, McClelland), as a theoretical argument for joking relationship in the field of management.

Joking relationship as a concept is heavily rooted in the thoughts of social identity theory and social exchange theory. The true value of social identity is to recognise and to have a sense of belonging which is empowering to people in a given relationship. The essence of social identity theory is to support collective orientation towards group values. The value joking relationship is to affect and define individual and collective behaviours. Similarly, social identity also affects both individual and collective behaviour as a token to positively support individual and group outcomes.

According to social identity theory, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories such as organisational membership or group affiliation to help promote the agenda of social inclusion. Accordingly, social identity is understood as the individual's self-concept, acknowledgement of a membership of a social group with a strong emotional attachment significance to create value for all. Whenever individuals belong to one group, interact collectively or individually with one another creates, group identification, and instances of intergroup behaviours. Social identity for individuals and groups defines behaviours and expect commitment (affective or cognitive commitment) that translates into loyalty [21].

Social identity also relates to social inclusion in many aspects within or outside the organisation. Individuals who are included feel empowered to take part in working to achieve organisational goals. Social inclusion from the organisational perspective is linked to organisational justice for consideration of both minority and majority within the framework of diversity management. Inclusion to employees is the feeling of been accepted and treated as an insider by others in the work system. According to Roberson [22] inclusion involves all members of the organisation, focused on increasing the participation and engagement of all employees with a clear aim of leveraging the positive impact of diversity for organisational "competitive advantage". Inclusion means acceptance of diverse employees making them feel accepted and included in work environment [23].

The social exchange theory argued on the merits of affiliation to make possible the exchanges of possibilities to serve each need. Where there is an exchange of rewards, there exist some sort of recognition of the existence of a relationship that warrant that exchange to take place. The basic argument of social exchange theory emphasized that relationship evolves overtime and into trusting, loyal and mutual commitment. Parties to the relationship must abide by certain 'rules' of exchange. According to Emerson [17], norms of exchange define the relationship in any exchange or reciprocal relationship. Joking relationship is very much similar to the ideas of social identity as joking relationship practice is aligned with identity as one must first recognise the existence of joking ties before engaging in the practice. The exchange in joking relationship is expected to be mutual and consensual to all parties [18].

According to Blau [16] social exchange is anchored on trust based on the willingness of parties to be vulnerable to each other and performs action important to the other and reciprocity is the key variable in social exchange theory. Social exchange is about support and recognition of the existence of a relationship that relates to the doctrines of empowerment, support and recognition. This is very much the thoughts of joking relationship.

McClelland [24], the needs theory that relates to joking relationship is the 'need for affiliation'. People with huge affiliation needs are attracted to work in environments which involves developing and maintaining networks, friendly relationship with other individuals. The work environment today is not only limited to the internal structures but also extend beyond to the external environment where important stakeholders work with employees and as such develop relational and social capital to help organisation to have competitive advantage and a sustained relationship with key stakeholders.

Kanter [25], theory of structural empowerment recognises both formal and informal power. The informal power relates to the doctrines of joking relationship where informal power is derived within and outside the organisation that behaviourally affects employees. Informal power develops from close contacts, networks and social alliances with peers, superiors and subordinates as well as outside contacts. Informal power is important is strengthening relational and social capital beneficial to the organisation. These social contacts and network groups facilitate and strengthen cooperation to help accomplish organisational goals.

TABLE I.   CATEGORIES AND JOKING RELATIONSHIP AFFILIATES

Category	Groups & Joking partners
Lineage (family)	**Cousins** (Children of Aunts & uncles); **Grandparents/children** (from the Father & Mothre's family)
Tribe (ethnicity)	**Jola** (Fula aud Serere); **Fula** (Serere, Jola, Balanta, Serahule, people ofKaabu & Coblahs); **Serahule** (Fula & people of Baddibu); **Jahanka** (Fula); **Serere** (Jola, Fula & Bal ant.a)
Region (places)	**Foui** (Niumi); **Baddibu** (Kiang, Tilibonko); **Jarra** (Niumi); **Kombo** (Kaabu)
Town / Village	**Brikama** (Brufut); **Gunjur** (Sukuta)
Profession	**Griots /praise Singer** (Trader); **Blacksmith** (Coblah)
Surname/ Family Name	**Badjie** (Sonko & Manga); **Bah** (Jallow); **Colley** (Nyassi); **Tonray** (Sanyang, Hydua, Daffeh, Krubally & Kanteh); **Saho** (Sisoko, Swo & Sillah); **Sanneh** (Dibba, Fatty, Kujabi, Tamba & Coblah); **Ceesay** (Camara, Darbroe & Touray); **Jobe** (Njie); **Jaiteh** (Touray); **Secka** (Gaye); **Jabbi/ Gassama** (Jammeh); **Drammeh** (Suso & Jaiteh); **Keita** (Krubally & Kuyatdl); **Krubally** (Ceesay, Keita, Konateh, Sisoko, Touray, Camara, Dumbuya, Kuyateh, Touray & Hydara); **Kanteh** (Jallow, Cttsay, Sidibeh, Bah, Kuyateh, Keita, Tangara & Touray); **Sissoko** (Ceesay, Krubally, Keita, Saho & Konateh); **Trawalley** (Krubally & Jarra); **Sowe** (Barry & Jawo); **Sanyang** (Touray, Jawo, Jarju & blacksmiths); **Jobarteh** (Danso, Darboe, Jobe & Trawalley); **Jeng** (Faal, Jagne & Nyang); **Samureh** (Touray); **Dambelly** (Konteh); **Manneh** (Coblah); **Jarju** (Sarjo, Badjie & Samateh); **Samateh** (Touray & Kujabi); **Wally** (Darboe, Barrow & Jabbi) etc.

Joking relationship in the Gambia follow four distinct pattern of joking affiliations. These patterns include lineage (internal affinity), tribe, region and traditional profession (external affinity). The external affinity is the most important as it matters to defining the nature and outcome for long-term relationship where parties accept to be vulnerable to each other with some level of sacrifice. The internal affinity is the family which is quite normal to have close membership ties as always addressed as "blood is thicker than water", see table 1.
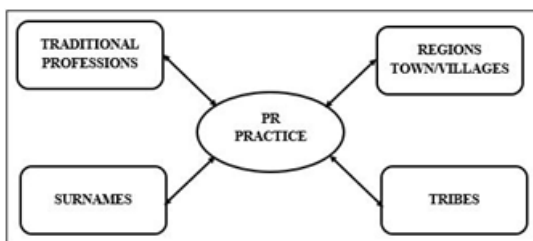

Fig. 1.   Patterns of joking relationship in Gambia.

This model in Figure 1 represents the possibility the public relations practitioner has at his disposal due to Joking ties to create a better relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. The PR practitioner in the Gambian situation has strong affiliation to one group, two groups or three groups that strengthen his ability and agility to create a commonality for the organisation through his personal, social connections and network. The dual arrows indicate a mutual interest, it means

public relations practitioner will influence to serve his organisations interest, but the other party also has the same power and influence to make the PR practitioner to listen to serve their interest through the organisation.

The model determines the use of joking relationships as a strategic tool or approach for use by public relations practitioners that translate into effective communication, truthful, honest and objective inter-change / exchange to create strategic relationships. According to the conceptual model, Public Relations can only create effective communication through the use of Joking relationship as a supporting communication approach. Joking relationship suitability as a strategic tool depends on the situation and people involved in the engagement and therefore it can sometimes take a contingent approach to dealing with issues based on prevailing circumstance.

Equally thoughtful, communication effectiveness also depends on the situation at hand and the parties in a communication relationship. Both public relations and joking relationship concept has a complementary effect on each other as the approach to communication pattern relates to formal-informal approach or informal-formal approach to effective communication relationship. Either way, the trajectory of the approach will definitely produce desired outcomes contingent upon the situation and the parties.

Public Relations approach requires dialogic engagement and involvement of key stakeholders according to the two-way symmetrical model [3]. Joking relationship as a concept of long-term societal doctrine is defined by close engagement and involvement of the key parties for the common profit of all in the context and content of mutualism and reciprocity.

Joking relationship is an already establish social relationship that existed for centuries and is recognised by all people. The use of Joking relationship concept by the PR practitioner enhances the ability to create winnable outcome for the organisation and also for the stakeholders engaged. Effective communication is always available and realised if the parties engaged in a relationship recognised each other as the essence of effective communication is about understanding that translates into control, devoid of chaos, and confusion due to misunderstanding. This paper defines "***joking relationship as an informal and social relationship characterised by interactive engagement to tease, mock, make fun of each other, ridicule to assume a commonality for the good of all and society***". Joking relationship creates a sense of belonging. Therefore, it allows parties to the relationship to claim ownership and strive to sustain it for continuity.

The paper creates an explanation as to the fit-between the use of joking relationship by the PR expert to result to effective communication in its drive to benefit both society and business. The paper, in the model above portrays the PR practice dependent on joking relationships in Gambia situation or context into unique niche in its interpretation of its social obligations. The PR practitioner in the Gambia is socially entitled and with that entitlement placed him at a strategic

position to mutually negotiate on behalf of the organisation for win-win outcome. This unique social character can help the practitioners to easily register effective communication not only through persuasion but dialogic process to give value to the other party. Within the confines of joking relationship, the public relations practitioner's quest to influence joking partners for the good of the organisation. The dominant influence tactics are also utilized in joking situation involving inspirational appeal, exchange, personal appeal, ingratiation and coalition [26]. Therefore, I posit that;

Proposition: Joking relationship relates to and supports Public relations practice in the Gambia.

III. METHODS

A. Sample and Survey

The study used a mixed method approach to obtain relevant information. The idea to engage in mix method, first with qualitative research followed by quantitative is based on the fact that I find no literature on joking relationship from the perspective of management. The aim was to create new constructs of measure for joking relationship and qualitative is highly recommended as such. Purposive sampling is use in this stage to seek for informant with expertise and knowledge regarding the subject matter.

The research first engages in qualitative approach where a total of 20 informants were solicited to obtain information from them. The 20 people comprises of two sets of people, 10 public relations practitioners and 10 people grounded in the ideas of joking relationship. A total of 8 people accepted and were available for face-to-face interview and the remaining 12 were supplied with open ended questions after an intense negotiation to enable them to answer at their free chosen time.

Based on the information obtained, which was thoroughly assessed, analysed and experts support on both joking relationship and public relations practice in the Gambia identified six themes for joking relationship and four themes for public relations practice. These joking relationship themes were used to develop a questionnaire.

- Mocking (to subdue the other party)
- Accusation (to create quilt and get your way out)
- Blaming (to strengthen your position or bargaining power)
- Humour (to create situation of serenity, calm, show connection and appeal)
- Insult (to show possession, ownership and obedience)
- Provocation (to draw attention or to use as an ice breaker)

The paper identified the context in which the PR practitioner in the Gambia can use joking relationship concepts to help him bail a current or recurring desirable or undesirable situation for the organisation. The four constructs were agreed as measure for PR in the Gambia and it includes;

- Negotiation (bargaining, win or lose)
- Mediation (conflict or crisis situation)
- Solving Problem (conflict or crisis situation)
- Business (exchange of goods & services)

The second part involves developing questionnaire using the six stage of scales development [27]. The same experts were consulted to validate the items and approve them before distribution. In this stage, simple random sampling technique was applied in the survey. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to both public relations practitioners and University of the Gambia students who are working, have diverse knowledge and experience of joking relationship as the population of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Survey Responses

A total of 75 usable questionnaires were returned, comprising of 38 (51%) male and 36 (49%) female. All survey participants (100%) are aware of joking relationship, 66% claimed being affected by joking relationship, and the respondents (100%) approve the use of joking relationship. A total of 87% use joking relationship in a given situation and 92% claimed the use of joking relationship in a given situation produced desired outcomes. About 96% of the survey participants have a joking ties between 2 and 4 joking patterns.

B. Descriptive Statistics

For the questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale was used for the study as an instrument to gather data with only one negative point. Ten questions form the basis of the research to assess the perception of the respondents. All the questions were answered using the following scalable score value starting with the highest score as 5 (used a great deal); 4 (used a good deal); 3 (somehow used); 2 (A little used) and 1 (Not at all used) as the only negative score value. The SPSS tool was for descriptive analysis showing the mean and standard deviation scores for the responses of the two research variables. Refer to table I for the mean score of the two variables.

TABLE II.   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variables	Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	*Standard Deviation*	*Correlations*
Public Relations	12.662	4.454	
Joking Relations	12.662	4.454	
Sig. (1 tailed)			0.000

a. Dependent variable Public Relations

b. Predictor (Constant) Joking Relations

C. Analysis

The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique using SmartPls tool to establish the relationship between variables. The key variables of the study are joking relationship and public relations. It helps to establish the reliability and validity of the items of the study as can be seen from table 2 below. Ten constructs form the basis of measures for the two variables, six for joking relationship and four for public relations. Indicator loadings were pegged at a .70 threshold or higher [28] as the acceptable and preferred loading factor.
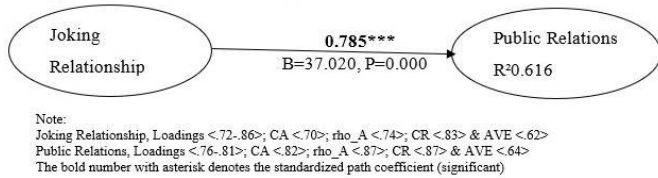
The validity and reliability have been established through the loading factors of the indicators. For the joking relationship variable, out of the six indicators, three loaded below the recommended threshold of below .70 and are therefore removed as outliers. The acceptable joking dimensions with a recognised loading include accusation, humour and mock, while blaming, insult and provocation are rejected. The average variance extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's Alpha are well above the cut-off mark limit and therefore established the validity and reliability of the indicators.

Note:
Joking Relationship, Loadings <.72-.86>; CA <.70>; rho_A <.74>; CR <.83> & AVE <.62>
Public Relations, Loadings <.76-.81>; CA <.82>; rho_A <.87>; CR <.87> & AVE <.64>
The bold number with asterisk denotes the standardized path coefficient (significant)

Fig. 2. The variable relationship.

TABLE III.   SUMMARY OF REFLECTIVE OUTER MODEL

Variable	Indicator	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Joking Relationship	Accuse	0.779	0.704	0.743	0.833	0.625
	Humour	0.723				
	Mock	0.864				
Public Relations	Business	0.766	0.828	0.876	0.878	0.644
	Mediation	0.811				
	Negotiation	0.816				
	Solve Problem	0.815				
					* All item loadings > 0.7 indicates indicator reliability [29]	
				* All average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.6 indicates convergent reliability [28,29]		
				* All composite reliability (CR) > 0.8 indicates internal consistency [28,29]		
					* All Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 indicates indicator reliability [28]	

D. Discussion

The path coefficient of the model is highly significant indicating support for structural model fit. The hypothesized path relationship between joking relationship and public relations is statistically significant and relevant with 0.785 strong effect size. This relationship therefore establishes the effect and influence of joking relationship on public relations practice in the Gambia with t-statistics and p/value of (B=37.020, P=0.000).

The findings of the research therefore support the research proposition and the research question. Research question "***can joking relationship be an effective tool for establishing long-term relationship?***" is clearly demonstrated using informant responses. "*People who use jokes tend to be more approachable. Laughing or finding anything humorous is actually a strong stress relief*" (*Informant 1, 2019*). "*I use joking relationship it as a strategy to get along with others for personal benefit*" (*Informant 6, 2019*). "*Joking relationship is instrumental in shaping relationships. It creates harmony among people*" (*Informant 10, 2019*). Social and relational capital exists in the relationship and social networks both inside

and outside constitutes a valuable resource for the organisation [12,13].

The second research question, "***what is the linkage between joking relationship and societal benefits?***". "*The Gambia is the smiling coast of Africa; social and ethnic joking relationship plays an important role unify the people and create a conducive environment. It helps in conflict resolution. It helps in mediation. It also creates an atmosphere of peace*" (*Informant 4, 2019*). Joking relationship helps to can be the avoid confrontation in difficult circumstance, it also help to improve people's social or economic standing in society [7]. Significance of joking alliance in resolving conflicts is obvious and joking relations were a important factor in Senegambia region for conflict resolution [11].

This question; "*what is the linkage between joking relationship and business benefits?*" is answered with, "*Joking can be used in business situation because it helps one to sell goods or services communicating what they are selling in terms of making fun. In business like selling products, a satisfied customer is a happy customer, creating smiles on your customers face make them valued the business relationship*"

(*Informant 1, 2019*). "*Joking relationship is important because people can use the relationship to even boost sales of the business. Like the serahules and Baddibunkas, the two always used the relationship when engaging in trade interactions and the outcome is win-win for all*" (*Informant 9, 2019*). Joking relationship helps to negotiate and engage others in exchange situation, it helps to bridge differences in a challenging situation [7].

V. CONCLUSION

In summary the results of the study have indicated that joking relationship is quite appropriate for use by public relations practitioners as a strategic approach to help establish effective relationship as demonstrated by the study model. The result of the research demonstrated that the new generation of Gambians lean towards the **soft-joking relationship themes** compared to the old generation Gambian. The use of the hard-**joking relationship themes** is common and used between Serahules and Baddibukans, Fulas and Balantas.

The research makes a noteworthy contribution to literature as the first study to try to integrate joking relationship concept into management arena. Another important contribution is the creation and presentation of new constructs as well as valid measures of joking relationship that can be applied in any part of the world. In conclusion, the research hypothesis and research questions were all supported. The objective of the paper has been achieved and hope it will provide new impetus for further curiosity and research by both business scholars and practitioners to gain a deeper understanding joking relationship concept and practice in the Gambia. This paper should be critic in light of its limitation as it draws inspirations from the Gambia but can be applied in societies practicing joking relationship. Future research is recommended especially how joking relationship defines behaviour in the organisation to improve relationships.

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