

The Study of the Practiced Models of Communication in Major Governmental Institutions in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan does practice public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs), but it is not clear which models of communication in public relation are applied for effective practice of this profession in the country. Therefore, this study was conducted to answer the question through distribution of questionnaires, conducting interviews, and making observation. The findings showed that Afghanistan yet to shift from totally press agency or publicity to public information model, and then to a two-way asymmetric model of communication. The result also indicated that media relation dominates the practice of public relation, while publication management stands second. Major governmental institution (MGI) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan usually manage media relations to increase awareness about their activities and achievements. Also, MGI publish and maintain some certain publications (e.g. magazine, brochure, website, social media etc.) to do publicity and increase public awareness. Scholars in fact, recommend the two-way symmetric model of communication as the most ethical practice of public relations, but Afghanistan yet to travel milestones to apply this model of communication for the practice of public relations in the country. The findings of this study indicate that major governmental institutions (MGI) mostly practice public information model in which media relations is the task that are done the most.

Keywords: Communication, Model of Communication, Media Relation, Mean Practice, Public Relations, Practice

1. INTRODUCTION

The necessity of public relations in an organization is like the need for good quality food for life-being in 21st century. In another word, an organization without effective public relations is like a live-being without hygiene feeding up that would struggle to stay alive. Thus, public relations inserts blood to veins of any organizations if practiced and managed effectively, like a human healthy heart effectively propels blood to the body via different veins. Schmitz [8] defines the public relations as the difference between life and death for an organization, or the difference between profitability and failure.

Therefore, a relatively comprehensive definition from a prominent scholar, Cutlip, helps us to describe the premise stated above very well. Stromback and Kiouisis (2011) quote Cutlip's definition of public relations in their book 'Political Public Relations' as "public relations is the management distinct function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its successes or failure depends". This definition highlights the importance of public relations that the successes or failure of any organizations depends on effective practice of public relations that manages the reputation and relationships of any institution with publics in general. Also, Stromback and Kiouisis (2011) quote Grunig and Hunt (1984) definition of public relations as they state "public relations is the management of communication between and organization and its publics".

Scholars has emphasized on constructive and reciprocated roles of public relations for relationships building, and also insist on two-way symmetrical communication between an organization and its publics for more effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, Grunig and Hunt (1984) in 'Managing Public Relations' introduce four major models of public relations; press

agency model, model of public information, two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication model.

Grunig, et al. (2002) suggest the two-way symmetrical communication the most preferable model of public relations for practicing vis-à-vis relationship building in any organization. Though public relations are practiced in Afghanistan, but it is not clear which models of public relations, and to which extent is practiced. Thus, this study is conducted to answer this question. At the end of this study, the right and proper model/s is/are suggested to the major governmental institutions (MGI) of Afghanistan based on theories, and recommendations of the participants.

1.1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though Alloza et al. (2021) state that The Global PR and Communication Model describes the roadmap and building blocks for the public relations and Communications role, providing professionals with a toolkit that consist of all the resources, capabilities and skills needed for creating organizations with concrete reputations that produce trust, but this model is not in the focus of this study. But, the study highlights another model of public relations yet to be promoted in Afghanistan particularly in major governmental institutions (MGI) in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Grunig and Hunts (1984) in the book "managing public relations" have estimated the percentage of practice of each model that table 1 summarizes the estimation clearly. Based on the estimation of Grunig and Hunts [5], public information was the dominant model of practice in governmental institutions, nonprofit associations and businesses at that particular point of time.

Table 1. Estimation percentage practice of four models of public relations in 1984.

Base of Difference	Press Agency/Publicity	Public Information	Two Way-Asymmetrical	TwoWay-Symmetrical
Estimation Percentage of Practice	15%	50%	20%	15%

Later on, Tyrone M. Woodyard submitted a thesis titled "air forces public affairs: the four models of public relations and excellence in public relations" to the University of Maryland, USA for the degree of master in arts in 1991 under direction of James Grunig. Woodyard (1998) states that the findings of his study show that the air forces public relations practitioners use two models of press gentry and public information more than any ones else, but there was no dominant model at all. The findings of this study also indicate that the public relations practitioners of air forces manage the public affairs of the organizations strategically, but do not utilized formal or scientific research techniques.

Sriramesh (2000) studied four organizations in India to explore the practice of four models of public relations in the sampled organizations. He used survey method through self-reported questionnaire system and ethnographic analysis found that respondents engaged in two-way symmetric communication, but the press agency/publicity model dominated the practice of public relations of the four organizations.

Sahoo & Nayak (2022) findings indicate that although public relations practice started in the pre-independence era, progress was perceived after 1947, especially with initial funding from the government and public sector organizations in multi-billion industry in India.

Stromback and Kiousis (2011) quote Edward Bernays that the three elements of public relations such as informing people, persuading people, and integrating people exist in the world as long as

human being. Based on this assumption, public relation does exist in Afghanistan too since ancient times. As Gilardo (2018) believes that painting on caves, and engraving on stones indicate the basic signs of public relations. These types of signs are still available in some historical places in different parts of the Afghanistan. Some of the old fashion public relations such as delivering speeches in holy places, gatherings, and word of mouth are still in practice in Afghanistan.

Though public relations have been taught in some universities of the country since 2011, there is lack of scientific study in this field of study. Thus, this study would be a unique one in this regard in Afghanistan.

1.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

UKEssay (2018) describes four model of public relations that Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed. These four models consist of press agency model, public information model, two-way asymmetrical model and two-way symmetrical model.

Through the history, four models of public relations have been practiced since the origin of this profession in the world of business as state Grunig and Hunt (1984). These models also indicate the different stages and historical development of public relations in organizations and in managing individuals' communications. The first model, according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) is termed 'Press Agency' or 'Publicity' that looks to find out a piece of space in the news media for propagating through one way-communication in which little research is conducted in the fields of sport, theatre, product promotion etc. The second model is called 'Public Information' in which information is disseminated through one way-communication and the truth is important to take in their account; mostly governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses etc. practice this model. Press agency and public information share two common characteristics: conduction of little research and following one way-communication.

Two way-asymmetrical model is a further development in the history of public relations. In this model, as Grunig and Hunt (1984) state that public also have a say in this paradigm of communication in the field of public relations, but organization and the public necessarily do not have the same opportunity and chances to communicate and interact while feedback, and opinions are taken in account at the time of communication. This model is called scientific persuasion, and mostly competitive businesses practice it as Grunig and Hunt (1984) state. In the two way-symmetrical model, public relations practitioners work as mediator between an organization and its public as Grunig and Hunt, (1984) state. They believe that this model is the most recommended way of communication for effective practicing of public relation by emphasizing on more successes because it gives the opportunity for both parties, organization and public, to have equal chances in communicating their values, goods, services and needs; in this way, public express their views on organization policies, product and services which are considered for decision making by organization. Grunig and Hunt (1984) define this model as mutual understanding, two-way balanced effect with formative and evaluative understanding nature of research. Table 2 provides the summary of the four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984) state in the book 'Managing Public Relations'.

Table 2. Summary Explanation of Characteristics of Four Models of Public Relations.

Characteristi c Base	Press Agency/Publi city	Public Information	Two Way- Asymmetrical	TwoWay- Symmetrical
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Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of Information	Scientific Persuasion	Mutual Understanding
Nature of Communication	One Way, Complete Truth not Important	One Way-Communication; Truth Essential	Two Way; Imbalanced Effect	Two Way; Balanced Effect
Communication Model	Sender → Receiver	Sender → Receiver	Sender ⇌ Receiver Feedback	Group ⇌ Group
Nature of Research	Little, Counting House	Little; Readability, Readership	Formative, Evaluative of Attitudes	Formative, Evaluative of Understanding
Where Practiced Today	Sport, Theatre, Product Promotion	Government, Non-profit Org. Business	Competitive Business Agencies	Regulated Business Agencies

These models summarized in table 2 are used for conceptual framework of this study with aim to figure out which of these models is practiced in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of the country.

1.3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This study aims to figure out the answer to the question "which models of communication and to what extent is/are used in practicing public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan considering the four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984) summarized in table 2 in its account". The major outcome of this study would be the recommendation of a model for practicing in the profession of public relations suitable for the current situation of Afghanistan.

1.4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore the practice of public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan focusing on which models of communication and to what extent is/are used in practicing public. To achieve the set goal, this study stays on the following objectives:

1. To study the perception of public relation in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan;
2. To study the practice of public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan; and
3. To explore which models of communication in practicing public relations is/are practiced in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

2. METHODOLOGY

As stated in literature review, although the signs of old fashion public relations remained glorious in different parts of the country from the ancient years, but public relations as academic discipline is relatively very young in Afghanistan. It means that there should be fewer academic studies in this field of science. Thus, this study could be a unique one in its part in the country.

Over all, this is a survey research design for an explorative study in which, for data collection, two different questionnaires were distributed to some public relations practitioners in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Afghanistan, and some offices have been visited for observation. Moreover, 4 Sr. practitioners of public relations and academics were interviewed in order to have their views on the practice of public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

2.1. SAMPLING APPROACH

The major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul make the population of this study. Thus, ministry of higher education, ministry of interior affaires, ministry of urban development, ministry of counter narcotics, office of the president, and office of attorney general have been deliberately sampled for this study.

2.2. SAMPLE SIZE

The total of 60 copies of a questionnaire distributed to the practitioners of public relations in the sampled institutions and collected back 54 copies which were analyzed for interpretation and presentation, a total of 11 copies of another questionnaire distributed to 5 academics and 6 Sr. PR practitioners and then analyzed for extraction of meaning for reporting, and finally 4 experts and Sr. practitioners of public relations interviewed for integrating the finding presentation. Thus, the total of 69 respondents participated in this study.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

MS. Excel was utilized to summarize and tabulate the data. Based on the summarized data, discussion and argument are made and a conclusion is drawn.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Grunig, et al. (2002) in *Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organizations* recommend two-way symmetrical communication as the most ethical model for practice in public relations, on the other hand, other models are defined as organization favored in which the organization has more control and power over audiences. The first three models indicate a practice of public relations that tries through persuasion mode of communication to achieve the organization's goals while the fourth one focuses on balancing interests of organization and the interests of the publics.

Hung-Baesecke et al. (2021) state that the team of Excellence (i.e. Grunig et al., 2002)) developed 10 generic principles in their findings in which one is the usage of two-way symmetrical model of public relations. On the other hand, Grunig and Kim (2021) state that dependent behaviors go forward from one-way vs. two-way communication, and then to synchronic and diachronic ways, to four models of public relations stated in table2.

Monib et al. (2021) quote Patel et al. (n.d.) that many administrations occasionally use disproportionate two-way models; but the prevailing model has rarely been used. In addition, organizations often use the two-way model of symmetric alongside the two-way model of asymmetric.

Thus, which of the characteristics of the models briefed in table 2, and explained earlier in this section are applied in public relations in Afghanistan is the question that this article deals with in order to figure out the models of communication which are most practiced in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Afghanistan.

The first objective for this study was to gage the understanding of the practitioners of public relations in Afghanistan of the profession. Nearly 39 per cent of practitioners of public relations in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, think that public relations include marketing and advertisement, increases media coverage, and synergizes internal and external activities of any organizations for better results. Over 33 per cent believe that public relations synergize internal activities of any organizations for better results while near 4 per cent don't have any idea about public relations. It ifs while around 5.6 per cent believe that public relations synergize the external activities or relationships for effective practice and better results.

The observation of the researchers of this study indicates that public relations limp in internal coordination as there is no effective coordination, but there is lack of inspiration in the major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of the country. Figure 1 provides details about perceptions of practitioners of public relations.

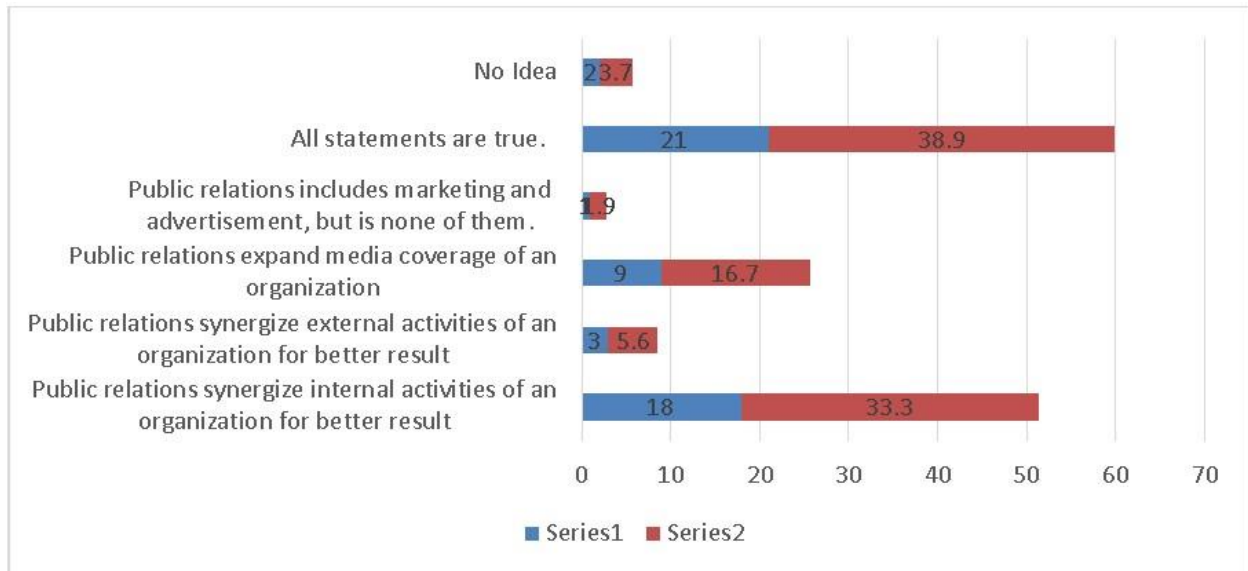


Figure 1. The perception of PR practitioners of public relations.

Almost all of Sr. practitioners of public relations hated the 'like me' option in relation to the statement of 'press agency, public information, and two-way communication' are the models of communication used for public relations practice while only one practitioner clicked the 'unlike me' option relating to the mentioned statement. Figure 2 visualizes the 'like me' and 'unlike me' data in which 'like me' means that I agree while 'unlike me' means that I don't agree with this statement in which 5 academics plus 5 Sr. PR practitioners liked while only one Sr. PR practitioner disliked the statement.



Figure 2. Like me and unlike figures of academics and Sr. PR practitioners.

The second objective was to study the practice of public relations in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan in order to look for the application of models of public relations. Thus, the different tasks of public relations with three options of Yes, Sometimes, and NO shared with the respondents to state their experiences of practicing public relations considering the given tasks of media relation, internal relation, external relation, issue management, crisis management, event management, publication management, and lobbying.

Table 3 shows the means practice of different roles that public relations play in any organizations.

Table 3. Means of roles that public relations plays in any organizations.

PR Tasks	Mean Yes	Mean Sometimes	Mean No
Media Relation	6.9	3.7	0.4
Internal Relations	4.6	5.4	1
External Relations	4.1	5.3	1.6
Issue Management	2.1	6.8	2.1
Lobbying	4.6	4.1	2.3
Crisis Communication	3.7	4.1	3.1
Event Management	4.8	4.0	2.2
Publication Management	5	4	2
Total	35.8	37.4	14.7

Table 3 indicates that the mean Yes media relations is greater than mean Sometimes and, of course, greater than mean No meaning that the practice of media relations is almost the practice of public relations in Kabul, the capital of the country. On the other hand, the mean Sometimes practice of internal relation, external relation, and the issue management are greater than the mean Yes practice of these roles of public relations which are 5.4, 5.3 and 6.8 respectively.

The mean practice of Yes and Sometimes for lobbying, crisis communication, event management, and publication management almost go head-to-head as their means ratios are 4.6:4.1, 3.7:4.1, 4.8:4.0 and 5.0:4.0 respectively. It is while the observation of the researchers of this study indicates that the offices of public relations sometimes produce some sorts of publications such as magazines, newsletters, brochures, banners etc. Publication management alongside media relation are the predominant practice of public relations in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the total means of No practice is also a considerable figure to take in account as it reaches to 14.7 meaning that public relations are not practiced effectively and properly in Kabul, the capital of this country. The total means of Yes practice lower than the total means of Sometimes practice as table 3 indicates, the total means for Yes practice reaches to 35.8 while the total means for Sometimes practice gets to 37.4.

The third objective was to explore which models of public relations is practiced in major governmental institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Table 4 shows that the Sr. PR practitioners, and academics mostly agree on press agency/publicity plus public information models.

Table 4. Opinions of Sr. PR practitioners and academics on models of public relation in Afghanistan.

Press Agency	Public Information	Tow-way asymmetric Model	Two-way Symmetric Model
Some sorts of Press agency model of communication are practiced in public relations offices in the MGIs, but these activities necessary do not mean	Public information is one of the dominant models of communication that offices of public relations	The practitioners of public relations sometimes are engaged in this model, but there is room for doubt about the effective practice.	This is the model that public relations should jump to it for effective practice of this profession in MGIs, but an interviewee thinks that his model is

the effective practice of publicity.	sometimes practice in MGIs.	practice in the country.
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Press agency or publicity is the common practice of public relations in Afghanistan (Tauhidi, personal communication, December 3, 2019). It is while another participant believes that even this model is not run through properly and effectively (Sarwari, personal communication, January 4, 2020). On the hand, an academic and a Sr. PR practitioner believe that the model of public information is practiced in the country (Shahabi, personal communication, January 6, 2020, and Oryakhel, personal communication, December 22, 2020).

Tawhedi, personal communication (2020) believes that the model of two-way asymmetric communication is practiced in the country, but it usually limps. On the other hand, a government Sr. practitioner believes that Afghanistan does practice two-way symmetric model of communication in the country (Oryakhel, personal communication, December 22, 2020).

From the points of interviewees, Afghanistan does practice press agency along with public information models, but sometimes it may go for two-way asymmetric, and rarely symmetric models of communication.

The observation of the researchers of this study suggests that Afghanistan should shift from the model of press agency of Vanderbilt remark as 'people be damned' to public information of Ivan Lee 'people be informed' (Schmitz, 2012). Later on, there is a need to shift to two-way communication particularly to two-way symmetrical communication in practicing of public relations in MGIs. There is no room for doubt Afghanistan can do that if the universities would experience a revolution.

4. CONCLUSION

The concept of public relations assembles the meaning media relation in the mindset of those who practice public relations in Afghanistan. The practice of this profession in Kabul, the capital of the country reminds of what William H. Vanderbilt remarked that 'the people be damned' while Ivan Lee, on the other hand, stated that 'the public be informed' (Schmitz, 2012).

Media relations include developing and distributing of press releases, and media advisories, managing press conferences, press interviews, etc. aiming to appear in a piece of news on television or radio or in print media. The mean for Yes + Sometimes practice of media relation reach to 10.6, almost 100 per cent. This means a kind of publicity that media agents were doing at the beginning of the emerge of public relation which is called press agency, but as the means Yes + Sometimes practice of publication management touch 9 indicating that there would be a type of public information model of public relations. Experts and Sr. PR practitioners state that Afghanistan practices almost all the four model of public relations in the country, but limping to practice effectively and properly each of them, but press agency and public information are the dominant model communication in practicing public relations in Afghanistan.

To conclude, based on findings of this study, Afghanistan yet to shift from publicity to a completely public information, and later to a two-way asymmetric communication, but there is milestones to travel to apply two-way symmetric communication model in major government institutions (MGIs) in Kabul, the capital of the country.

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