



Public Relations Involvement and Community Satisfaction in Universities

Muhammad Noor Saleh Al Adwan^a, ^aCollege of Communication and Media,
Al Ain University, P.O. Box: 112612, Abu Dhabi, UAE, Email:
muhammadnoor.aladwan@aau.ac.ae

This paper aims to investigate the importance of public relations in community involvement and the role of various public relations activities in community satisfaction. A questionnaire was distributed among 250 students in the Applied Science Private University in Amman, Jordan. The research shows a positive effect of public relations and types of activities on community satisfaction, while positive but a non-significant effects of community involvement on community satisfaction.

Key words: *Community involvement, community satisfaction, Jordan, public relations, universities.*

Introduction

Cornell University is a private Ivy League university in New York State, with the mission to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge, to educate the next generation of global citizens, and to promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community. Cornell also aims, through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of students, residents of New York, and people from different walks of life. Its vision on the other hand is to be an exemplary comprehensive research university for the 21st century. Faculty, staff, and students thrive at the university for several reasons including its unparalleled combination of quality and breadth; its open, collaborative and innovative culture; its founding commitment to diversity and inclusion; its land-grant legacy of public engagement; and last but not least its organized campuses in both rural and urban areas (available from: <https://www.cornell.edu/about/mission.cfm>). Similarly, the mission of Harvard College is to educate the citizens and citizen-leaders in society. The college does this



through its commitment to the transformative power of a liberal arts and science education. Beginning in the classroom with exposure to new ideas, new ways of understanding and new ways of knowing, students then embark on a journey of intellectual transformation. Through a diverse living environment (students living with counterparts studying different fields and coming from different walks of life with evolving identities), intellectual transformation is deepened and conditions for social transformation are created. From this, the College hopes that students will begin to fashion their lives by gaining a sense of what they want to do with their gifts and talents, while assessing their values and interests, and devising new methods through which they can be a blessing to the world (<https://college.harvard.edu/about/mission-and-vision>).

Similarly to its above counterparts the Arab American University aspires to be known as produce graduating students who far exceed expectations locally and globally, adhere to the highest ethical standards, and have a real impact on society through research and innovation. The mission of the same university is to promote, among its faculty members, staff and students, the desire to serve the community at large (available from: <http://www.aauj.edu/About-AAU/Mission-and-Vision>). The vision of the German-Jordanian University (GJU) is aspiring to become one of the region's leading universities and to be highly regarded for its learning and teaching excellence, focused research and enterprise, multiculturalism, and effective engagement with the community. Its mission is devoted to academic distinction in teaching, research, and community service. The conduct of research, scholarship, and creative activities is at the core of the University, including multiple missions of education, research, service, and outreach to the nation, the region, and beyond. GJU is committed to advancing Jordan and the region through the benefits of higher education, as well as a variety of outreach and vocational training programs (<http://www.gju.edu.jo/content/university-identity-51>). The mission of King Saud University is to provide distinctive education, produce creative research, serve society, and contribute in building the knowledge economy and community through learning, a creative thinking environment, the optimal use of technology, and effective international partnerships. Furthermore, its vision is to become a world class university and a leader in building the knowledge society (available from: <http://ksu.edu.sa/en/about-ksu/mission-vision>). Universities in the United Arab of Emirates are concerned about their strategies for addressing their society which is clearly raised up in the visions and the missions of these universities. The mission and vision of the University of Dubai is to become a world-class institution in education, research, and innovation, for the betterment and prosperity of the people in the region. The university also engages faculty in pure and applied research focused mainly on the economic development of Middle East & Africa (MEA) Region (Values statement available from: <http://www.ud.ac.ae/about-ud/vision-mission-values>).



Consequently, the vision of Al Ain University of Science and Technology is to be amongst the learning centres in the region, by achieving international quality standards in teaching, research, and community engagement. AAU seeks to become a learning centre of excellence that responds to market needs and prepares graduates who possess the scientific and technological competencies that are needed for their careers. The university plays an active role in the creation of knowledge through quality teaching and research. It values community engagement and nurtures partnerships with institutions and organizations through a commitment to the educational, technological and economic development of the country and the region (<https://aau.ac.ae/en/about-aau/aau-vision-mision/>).

Social responsibility is becoming important in most organizations, including private organizations. Public relations in private organizations should be active, and include activities that are genuinely directed toward society, rather than just reaching out to society through public relations. The activities are mostly in the hands of the decision-makers, and are not in the power of public relations or in its strategies (Al Jammal & Ayyad, 2005).

The main problem statement in this research is to explore the universities involvement in public relations in society. Furthermore, this research will add to research related to community involvement; a fairly under-researched area in the literature. Public relations are very important in this type of research. Therefore, this paper will serve as a contribution to the field of public relations in these activities, especially in Middle East countries.

Literature Review

Public relations used to focus on activities that were explicitly “public relations” (PR). The area was created relatively recently, originating in the US around the turn of the twentieth century (1897- 1905). It gained prominence in Australia from the mid-twentieth century. Subsequently, many do not use the term “public relations” to describe practices identified under this disciplinary label (Macnamara & Crawford, 2010). More broad-based studies show that public communication practices used in public relations have a much longer history than that documented in US-centric literature, and that they were in use in Australia well before the arrival of American “public relations” practices with General Douglas MacArthur which is widely cited as the origin of PR in Australia. Kriyantono (2015) studied "Public relations and corporate social responsibility in mandatory approach era in Indonesia", in regards to how Indonesia was the first nation in the world to adopt a mandatory approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Although legislators required CSR, they have not determined the measurement. The research aims to reveal the implementation of CSR in Indonesia. The article combines the Kanji Chopra Model and Turker's Scale to measure CSR and to offer a standard for different regions in Indonesia. This is because these models have been applied in Western and Eastern contexts. A survey has been conducted on 87 practitioners and it was

found that CSR was conducted by public relations officers with the focus of gaining social welfare.

Additionally, Ejelat (2011) asserted that the Social Responsibility of Public Relations in Communications Companies (Jordan Communication Company as a Case Study) aims to identify the role of public relations in the activities and practices that express the concept of social responsibility. The study used a descriptive survey from the point of view of the company's customers. The study was a random sample of the customers of the total number of members (432), who are both male and female in three Jordanian governorates: Irbid, Amman, and Madaba. The study posed a set of key questions and sub-questions to test five hypotheses, to relate customer levels of satisfaction to a range of demographic variables (gender, age, duration of dealing with the company's services, residential area). Results show that social responsibility function level occupies the middle position of the administrative structure of the Jordan Communication Group Company known as "Orange". Hence, Orange is a novelty form of public relations that integrates multiple communication tasks at the same time, and the company's strategy is based on three fundamental pillars: A - deployment of the internet. B - Sustainable community development. C - Support of small projects in the areas of communications. In addition, results showed that the company' activities in the fields of diffusion of the internet and presentations of special services achieved higher average customers approval. This is with no verification activities related to the environment or the fight against drugs, but only averages of low account, from the viewpoint of customers.

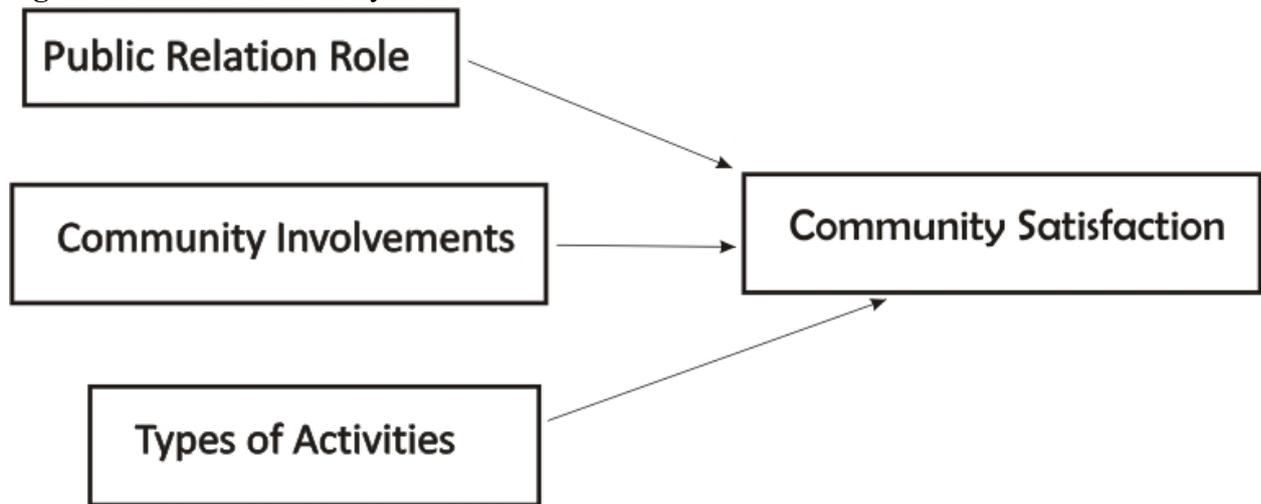
In their study, Yang and Chiou (2010) found that organizational factors have a greater influence on educational PR performance than individual factors. Their study was conducted in Taiwan where 600 questionnaires were distributed among administrative staff. In addition, a study conducted by Al Adwan (2013) shows the importance of O-PR and its type of practices towards organizational effectiveness in sustaining organizational image, identity, and reputation. The findings show significant relationships between O-PR practices and the type of relationships with organizational effectiveness (image, identity and reputation).

On the other hand, Al-Rwabdah and Abaenah (2010) conducted a study on the practice of social responsibility and the obstacles to applying it in Jordanian public organizations. The study aimed at identifying the extent of social responsibility towards workers, beneficiaries, and the local community. The study found that the practice of Jordanian public relations for social responsibility was medium. Two-thirds of the respondents mentioned the absence of a specialized department or unit of social responsibility. Furthermore, a study by Alzuabi (1990) examines reasons for the interest of the senior management in Jordanian public shareholding companies. Social responsibility is aimed at identifying the most influential factors in the decisions of senior management, in relation to their choice of areas of social

responsibility. The study explained a number of concepts related to social responsibility and to the environment surrounding public organizations in Jordan.

The model in the study exhibits the relationship between the independent variables such as public relation roles, community involvements, types of activities, and the dependent variable comprising community satisfaction as depicted in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Model of the Study



Consequently, this study consists of the following main hypotheses:

- H1: Public relation role has a positive and significant influence on community satisfaction.
- H2: Community involvements have a positive and significant influence on community satisfaction.
- H3: The types of activities companies undertake positively and significantly influence community satisfaction.

A quantitative, descriptive approach was used in determining whether public relation roles, community involvements, and types of activities (the independent variables) significantly influence community satisfaction (the dependent variables) of Jordanian universities. The population studied consisted of students in Applied Science in a private university where the most recently available data was obtained. The study utilized a random sample covering 70% of the population, which is considered representative and acceptable for the purposes of statistical analyses of the current study. A close-ended questionnaire was developed for primary data collection based on the related and past literature. The questionnaire was structured as follows: The first part was a cover letter which aimed to encourage respondents to participate in answering the questions, through an explanation of the response method and reassuring them that the information provided will be used solely for scientific research

purposes. The second part include suggestions regarding personal characteristics; thus, the questions in this part were primarily classificatory, and aimed at providing a proper background of the respondents. The third part raised questions regarding public relations roles, community involvements, and types of activities. Lastly, the fourth part contained questions about community satisfaction (Al Mualal, 2016). The study utilized a Likert five-point scale as one of the best and most frequently used scales to measure opinions, due to its ease and balance (Zikmund, 2003).

In the process of conducting the current study, 400 questionnaires were distributed to students of Applied Science at the Private University in Jordan. Out of this number, 50 were undelivered and 100 questionnaires were incomplete (missing responses). Thus, a total of 250 responses were usable for this analysis, giving a response rate of 62.5 %, as shown in Table 1 below, which summarises the response rates.

Table 1:Summary of Response Rates

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Questionnaire Administrated | 400 |
| Undelivered | 50 |
| Incomplete | 100 |
| No. of responses | 250 |
| Response rate (250/ 400) | 62.5% |

The reliabilities for the variables were calculated and all concurred with Nunnally's (1978) minimum threshold of 0.70. Table 2 lists the Cronbach's Alpha (coefficient alpha) of each factor, showing a high degree of reliability. Table 2 also shows that three independent variables and one dependent variable of the community satisfaction examined by the researcher.

Table 2:Reliability Results

| Variables | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Public Relation Role | 10 | .88 |
| Community Involvements | 5 | .74 |
| Types of Activities | 7 | .87 |
| Community Satisfaction | 10 | .81 |

Demographic Variables

The gender variable shows that male respondents make up 54.2% of the sample while females account for 45.8%. The respondents who are between 19 to 20 years of age account for 48.2%. The majority are of Jordanian nationality (70%).

Hypothesis Test

The result shows that the value of the independent variable has a positive and significant effect on community satisfaction as shown in Table 3 below. The results are in support of two hypotheses (H1, and H3). However, H2 is not supported. The data indicates that most of the variable in the study have a positive and significant correlation with community satisfaction.

Table 3:Hypothesis Results

| Hypothesis | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig |
|------------|------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| H1 | .169 | .080 | .182 | 2.107 | .036 |
| H2 | .098 | .075 | .124 | 1.312 | .191 |
| H3 | .193 | .070 | .205 | 2.762 | .006 |

Conclusions

This research examined the effect of student satisfaction of the public relations role, community involvements, and types of activities, on community satisfaction at a private university in Amman city. After collecting and analysing the data using SPSS, regression analysis showed that all the independent variables have their own significant effects on community satisfaction. Among the independent variables, types of activities have the highest effect on community satisfaction. Based on these results, a recommendation is made for Jordanian universities to focus more on involvement, for the purpose of improving service quality to provide students with more satisfaction, as well as to enhance their buying decision as to the services provided by the university.



REFERENCES

- Al Adwan, M.N. (2013). Influence of Organization- Public Relationship Practices on Organization Effectiveness in Jordanian Public Hospitals. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) – Kedah - Malaysia.
- Al Jammal, R. M; Ayad, M. (2005). Public Relations Management the Strategic Introduction. First Edition. Cairo: Egypt Lebanon Publisher.
- Al Muali1, A. (2016). The Effect of Service Qwlality Dimensions on Customers' Loyalty through Customer Satisfaction in Jordanian Islamic Bank. International Journal of Marketing Studies; Vol. 8, No. 6.
- Al-Rwabdah, M. A; and Abaenah, M. E; (2010). The level of exercise social responsibility and constraints applied in public relations in Jordan, Journal of Social Sciences, Vol, 38, No. 4.
- Ejelat, F. (2011). Social Responsibility of Public Relations in Communications Companies (Jordan Communication Company as Case Study). Unpublished Master Study. Middle East University - Jordan.
- Kriyantono, R (2015). Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility in Mandatory Approach Era in Indonesia Pmcedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. Volume 211, 25 November, Pages 320-327
- Macnamara, J. & Crawford, R. (2010). Reconceptualising public relations in Australia: A historical and social re-analysis. Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal Volume 11, Issue 2, 2010 ISSN 14140 – 4389
- Nunnally, J.C. (1978). Psychometric Theory, (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Yang, M. & Chiou, W. (2010). A country study on factors influencing the public relations practice in higher education in Taiwan. Asia Pacific Educ. Rev. 11:223-233 DOI 10.1007/s12564-010-9077- 1
- Zikmund, W.G. (2003). Business research methods. (7th ed.), Thomson Learning.