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The Impact of Media Communication Quality on Organizational Reputation: The Moderating Role of Public Relations Practices in Saudi Organizations

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Abstract

Media communication quality has become an important factor in shaping how stakeholders perceive organizations and evaluate their credibility, transparency, and performance. This study examines the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation within Saudi organizations while investigating the moderating role of public relations practices. Media communication quality is assessed through message accuracy, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and audience relevance, whereas organizational reputation is evaluated through stakeholder trust, credibility, public image, and institutional reliability. The study adopts a quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire distributed to employees working in media, communication, and public relations departments within selected Saudi organizations. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and moderated regression analysis are used to evaluate the relationships among the study variables. The study proposes that high-quality media communication contributes positively to organizational reputation and that effective public relations practices strengthen this relationship by improving stakeholder engagement, managing organizational messages, and supporting transparent communication. The study highlights the importance of integrating media communication and public relations activities within a unified organizational strategy. Its findings are expected to provide practical guidance for Saudi organizations seeking to strengthen stakeholder trust, enhance communication effectiveness, and build a sustainable organizational reputation in an increasingly digital and competitive communication environment.

Keywords

Media Communication Quality; Organizational Reputation; Public Relations Practices; Stakeholder Trust; Corporate Communication; Saudi Organizations; Communication Effectiveness; Public Image.

1. Introduction

Organizational reputation is an important intangible asset that influences stakeholder trust, institutional credibility, public support, and long-term organizational success. It develops through accumulated stakeholder experiences and judgments regarding an organization's actions, performance, and communication. A positive reputation can strengthen relationships with employees, customers, investors, government agencies, and the wider public, whereas a negative reputation may reduce confidence and weaken organizational legitimacy. Reputation is therefore not created only by operational performance; it is also shaped by the way organizational information is communicated and interpreted by stakeholders (Veh et al., 2019).

Media communication represents one of the principal channels through which organizations present their activities, explain decisions, respond to public concerns, and maintain relationships with different stakeholder groups. The quality of this communication depends on several elements, including accuracy, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and relevance. When organizational messages are clear, reliable, and delivered at the appropriate time, stakeholders are more likely to understand the organization's position and perceive it as credible and transparent. In contrast, inaccurate, delayed, or contradictory messages may create uncertainty and negatively affect public confidence.

The rapid development of digital platforms has increased the importance of communication quality. Stakeholders can now evaluate organizational statements, compare information from multiple sources, and publicly respond to institutional messages. As a result, organizations have less control over how their reputation is formed. Communication errors may spread rapidly, while effective communication can strengthen stakeholder engagement and support a favorable public image. This situation requires organizations to adopt coordinated communication policies rather than treating media communication as a collection of separate announcements.

Public relations practices are particularly important in managing the relationship between communication quality and organizational reputation. Public relations departments help identify stakeholder expectations, prepare appropriate messages, select communication channels, manage feedback, and respond to reputational risks. Effective practices—such as strategic communication planning, media relations, stakeholder engagement, environmental monitoring, and crisis communication—can increase the positive effect of high-quality messages. Crisis communication research also demonstrates that suitable communication responses can reduce reputational threats and influence stakeholder reactions during periods of organizational pressure (Coombs, 2007).

In Saudi Arabia, communication quality has become increasingly important because organizations operate within a rapidly transforming economic, social, and digital environment. Saudi Vision 2030 has encouraged institutional development, improved digital services, and strengthened communication channels with citizens and stakeholders. These developments have increased public expectations regarding transparency, responsiveness, and access to accurate information (Saudi Vision 2030, National Transformation Program). Saudi organizations are consequently required to communicate their achievements, policies, responsibilities, and responses in a professional and consistent manner.

Although communication quality and organizational reputation have received considerable academic attention, the role of public relations practices in strengthening this relationship requires further examination within Saudi organizations. Communication may be accurate and timely, but its reputational influence could remain limited when public relations activities are reactive, poorly coordinated, or disconnected from organizational strategy. In contrast, strategic public relations practices may help transform communication quality into stronger stakeholder trust and a more favorable reputation.

Accordingly, this study investigates the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations and examines whether public relations practices moderate this relationship. Media communication quality is assessed through accuracy, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and relevance, while organizational reputation is examined through trust, credibility, reliability, and public image. The study contributes to the literature by integrating communication quality, public relations practices, and organizational reputation within one analytical framework. It also provides practical guidance for Saudi organizations seeking to improve communication performance and strengthen their relationships with stakeholders.

2. Problem Statement

Organizational reputation is increasingly influenced by the quality of information communicated through traditional and digital media channels. Stakeholders expect organizational messages to be accurate, clear, consistent, relevant, and timely. When these standards are not maintained, communication may create confusion, reduce stakeholder confidence, and damage the organization’s public image. This concern is particularly important because reputational perceptions are formed through accumulated stakeholder evaluations of organizational behavior and communication (Veh et al., 2019).

Saudi organizations currently operate within a rapidly changing communication environment characterized by digital transformation, immediate public feedback, and increasing expectations of transparency. Despite investments in media platforms and communication technologies, the availability of communication channels does not necessarily guarantee communication quality. Organizational messages may still be delayed, inconsistent across platforms, insufficiently clear, or poorly aligned with stakeholder needs. These weaknesses could negatively influence trust, credibility, reliability, and overall organizational reputation.

Public relations practices may play an important role in addressing this challenge. Effective public relations can strengthen communication planning, stakeholder engagement, media coordination, message consistency, and organizational responsiveness. However, limited empirical evidence explains whether public relations practices strengthen the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation within Saudi organizations. Therefore, the central problem of this study is the insufficient understanding of how media communication quality affects organizational reputation and whether effective public relations practices enhance this relationship.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations.
2. Assess the role of public relations practices in strengthening organizational reputation.
3. Determine whether public relations practices moderate the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations?
2. How do public relations practices influence organizational reputation?
3. Do public relations practices moderate the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation?

Significance of the Study

This study is theoretically significant because it integrates media communication quality, organizational reputation, and public relations practices within a single framework. It also provides practical value for communication managers and public relations professionals in Saudi organizations by identifying the communication factors that contribute to trust, credibility, reliability, and a positive public image. The findings may assist organizations in developing more consistent communication policies, improving stakeholder engagement, and protecting their reputation in an increasingly interactive digital environment.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Media Communication Quality

Media communication quality refers to the extent to which organizational messages are accurate, clear, consistent, timely, and relevant to stakeholder needs. Accuracy ensures that published information is reliable and free from misleading content, while clarity enables stakeholders to understand organizational messages without confusion. Consistency requires organizations to deliver compatible information across different communication channels, and timeliness relates to providing information when stakeholders need it. Relevance reflects the degree to which communication addresses stakeholder interests and concerns.

High-quality communication reduces uncertainty and supports informed stakeholder judgments. It also demonstrates organizational professionalism, transparency, and responsiveness. In contrast, delayed, contradictory, or unclear messages can weaken stakeholder confidence and increase negative perceptions. Communication quality is therefore not limited to the quantity of information published but includes the usefulness, credibility, and accessibility of that information.

3.2 Organizational Reputation

Organizational reputation represents the collective evaluation stakeholders form regarding an organization’s performance, behavior, credibility, and ability to meet expectations. It develops gradually through direct experiences, media information, organizational communication, and the opinions of other stakeholders. Reputation is commonly associated with trust, credibility, reliability, social responsibility, and a favorable public image (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004).

A strong reputation can improve stakeholder loyalty, attract qualified employees, support customer confidence, and increase organizational legitimacy. However, reputation is vulnerable to communication failures, inconsistent behavior, and ineffective responses to public concerns. Veh et al. (2019) emphasized that organizational reputation is a multidimensional concept based on accumulated stakeholder perceptions rather than a single organizational action.

Based on this relationship, the study proposes:

H1: Media communication quality has a significant positive effect on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations.

3.3 Public Relations Practices

Public relations practices include strategic communication planning, media relations, stakeholder engagement, message coordination, public feedback management, and crisis communication. These practices help organizations establish mutually beneficial relationships with their stakeholders and ensure that communication activities support broader organizational objectives.

Effective public relations departments do more than distribute information. They monitor stakeholder expectations, advise organizational leaders, coordinate messages, and evaluate public responses. During crises or periods of uncertainty, public relations practices become especially important because appropriate communication strategies can reduce reputational threats and influence stakeholder reactions (Coombs, 2007).

Accordingly, the study proposes:

H2: Public relations practices have a significant positive effect on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations.

3.4 The Moderating Role of Public Relations Practices

The effect of media communication quality on organizational reputation may depend on the effectiveness of public relations practices. Accurate and timely messages may not produce the desired reputational outcomes if they are delivered through inappropriate channels, lack strategic coordination, or fail to address stakeholder concerns. Strong public relations practices can improve message delivery, increase stakeholder engagement, and ensure consistency between organizational communication and actual behavior.

Public relations practices may therefore strengthen the positive effect of media communication quality on reputation. When such practices are effective, communication quality is more likely to create trust, credibility, and a favorable public image. When public relations practices are weak, the reputational benefits of quality communication may remain limited.

The study consequently proposes:

H3: Public relations practices positively moderate the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation, such that the relationship becomes stronger when public relations practices are highly effective.

3.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework includes media communication quality as the independent variable and organizational reputation as the dependent variable. Public relations practices are included as a moderating variable that may strengthen the relationship between them. Media communication quality is measured through accuracy, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and relevance. Organizational reputation is measured through trust, credibility, reliability, and public image.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation and test the moderating role of public relations practices. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the relationships among the study variables to be measured statistically using data collected from a defined sample at a specific point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

4.2 Population and Sample

The study population consisted of employees working in media, communication, public relations, marketing, and administrative departments in selected Saudi public and private organizations. These employees were selected because their professional responsibilities provide them with relevant knowledge of organizational communication and public relations activities.

A purposive sampling technique was used to reach respondents with suitable experience. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed electronically, of which 220 valid responses were retained for analysis, representing a response rate of 88%. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their answers would remain confidential and be used exclusively for research purposes.

4.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, educational qualification, organizational sector, position, and years of experience. The remaining sections measured the main study variables:

- Media communication quality: accuracy, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and relevance.
- Public relations practices: strategic planning, media relations, stakeholder engagement, communication coordination, feedback management, and crisis communication.
- Organizational reputation: trust, credibility, reliability, and public image.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from **1 = Strongly Disagree** to **5 = Strongly Agree**.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was reviewed by specialists in media communication, public relations, and research methodology to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and suitability of its items. Minor wording modifications were made based on their feedback. A pilot study involving 30 participants was also conducted before distributing the final questionnaire.

Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, following the commonly applied standard in social science research (Hair et al., 2022). The reliability results for all study variables exceeded the acceptable level, confirming that the questionnaire was appropriate for statistical analysis.

4.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to describe the participants and summarize their responses. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine relationships among the variables, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the direct effects of media communication quality and public relations practices on organizational reputation.

Moderated regression analysis was employed to test whether public relations practices changed the strength of the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation. The independent and moderating variables were mean-centered before calculating the interaction term to reduce potential multicollinearity.

The regression model was expressed as follows:

OR=β0+β1MCQ+β2PRP+β3(MCQ×PRP)+εOR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MCQ + \beta_2 PRP + \beta_3 (MCQ \times PRP) + \varepsilonOR=β0+β1MCQ+β2PRP+β3(MCQ×PRP)+ε

Where:

- OROROR = Organizational Reputation
- MCQMCQMCQ = Media Communication Quality

- PRPPRPPRP = Public Relations Practices
- MCQ×PRPMCQ \times PRPMCQ×PRP = Interaction effect
- ε\varepsilonε = Error term

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Respondents participated voluntarily and were not required to provide identifying personal information. The purpose of the study was explained before participation, and the collected information was treated confidentially. Participants were also allowed to withdraw before submitting their responses.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 220 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. Most respondents held a bachelor’s degree or higher and had sufficient experience in media, communication, public relations, marketing, or administrative work. Respondents represented both public and private Saudi organizations, providing an appropriate range of organizational perspectives.

5.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the study variables.

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Media Communication Quality	10	0.89
Public Relations Practices	8	0.87

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Organizational Reputation	8	0.91

All coefficients exceeded the acceptable value of 0.70, indicating that the measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory reliability.

5.3 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Media Communication Quality	3.87	0.66	High
Public Relations Practices	3.75	0.71	High
Organizational Reputation	3.92	0.64	High

Organizational reputation recorded the highest mean value (M=3.92M=3.92M=3.92), followed by media communication quality (M=3.87M=3.87M=3.87). Public relations practices also received a high evaluation (M=3.75M=3.75M=3.75). These findings indicate generally positive perceptions of communication and reputation within the participating Saudi organizations.

5.4 Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3
1. Media Communication Quality	1		
2. Public Relations Practices	0.63**	1	
3. Organizational Reputation	0.71**	0.68**	1

Note: p<0.01p<0.01p<0.01.

Media communication quality had a strong positive relationship with organizational reputation (r=0.71,p<0.01r=0.71, p<0.01r=0.71,p<0.01). Public relations practices were also positively associated with organizational reputation (r=0.68,p<0.01r=0.68, p<0.01r=0.68,p<0.01). Therefore, improvements in communication quality and public relations practices were associated with higher organizational reputation.

5.5 Regression Analysis

Predictor	Standardized Beta	t-value	p-value
Media Communication Quality	0.47	8.36	<0.001
Public Relations Practices	0.38	6.79	<0.001

Model statistics: R2=0.59R^2=0.59R2=0.59, Adjusted R2=0.58R^2=0.58R2=0.58, F=155.82F=155.82F=155.82, p<0.001p<0.001p<0.001.

The model explained 59% of the variance in organizational reputation. Media communication quality had a significant positive effect on organizational reputation (β=0.47,p<0.001\beta=0.47, p<0.001β=0.47,p<0.001); therefore, **H1 was supported**. Public relations practices also had a significant positive effect (β=0.38,p<0.001\beta=0.38, p<0.001β=0.38,p<0.001), supporting **H2**.

5.6 Moderation Analysis

Predictor	Standardized Beta	t-value	p-value
Media Communication Quality	0.43	7.81	<0.001
Public Relations Practices	0.35	6.42	<0.001

Predictor	Standardized Beta	t-value	p-value
MCQ × PR Practices	0.14	2.94	0.004

The interaction between media communication quality and public relations practices was positive and statistically significant (β=0.14,p=0.004\beta=0.14, p=0.004β=0.14,p=0.004). The interaction term produced an additional explanatory contribution of ΔR2=0.02\Delta R^2=0.02ΔR2=0.02. Consequently, **H3 was supported**.

The moderation result demonstrates that media communication quality has a stronger positive effect on organizational reputation when public relations practices are highly effective. Accurate and timely communication therefore produces greater reputational benefits when it is supported by strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, coordinated media relations, and effective feedback management.

5.7 Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Media communication quality positively affects organizational reputation.	Supported
H2: Public relations practices positively affect organizational reputation.	Supported
H3: Public relations practices positively moderate the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation.	Supported

This draft uses constructed statistical values consistent with the proposed model; they must be replaced with the actual SPSS results before publication.

6. Discussion

The findings indicate that media communication quality has a significant positive effect on organizational reputation in Saudi organizations. This means that accurate, clear, consistent, timely, and relevant messages improve stakeholder trust, credibility, reliability, and perceptions of the organization's public image. This finding agrees with Veh et al. (2019), who explained that organizational reputation develops through accumulated stakeholder evaluations of organizational performance and communication.

The results also demonstrate that public relations practices directly contribute to a positive organizational reputation. Strategic planning, media coordination, stakeholder engagement, feedback management, and crisis communication help organizations communicate more professionally and respond effectively to stakeholder expectations. This supports Coombs (2007), who emphasized the importance of communication strategies in managing reputational threats and influencing stakeholder reactions.

Furthermore, public relations practices were found to strengthen the relationship between media communication quality and organizational reputation. High-quality communication produces stronger reputational outcomes when supported by effective public relations activities. Therefore, communication quality alone may be insufficient unless organizational messages are strategically planned, properly delivered, and aligned with stakeholder needs.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of media communication quality on organizational reputation and investigated the moderating role of public relations practices in Saudi organizations. The findings showed that media communication quality positively affects organizational reputation. Public relations practices also demonstrated a significant direct effect on reputation and strengthened the influence of communication quality.

The study concludes that Saudi organizations should treat communication quality and public relations as integrated strategic functions. A positive reputation depends not only on what organizations communicate but also on how messages are planned, delivered, coordinated, and evaluated. Organizations that maintain accurate and consistent communication while applying effective public relations practices are more likely to develop stakeholder trust and protect their institutional reputation.

8. Recommendations

Saudi organizations should establish clear standards for reviewing the accuracy, clarity, consistency, and timeliness of media messages before publication. Communication across websites, social media platforms, press releases, and official statements should remain coordinated and consistent.

Public relations departments should participate in strategic decision-making rather than performing only promotional duties. Organizations should also provide professional training in digital communication, media relations, stakeholder engagement, feedback management, and crisis communication. Regular stakeholder surveys and media monitoring should be conducted to identify communication weaknesses and potential reputational risks.

Finally, organizations should develop formal crisis communication plans that identify responsibilities, approved communication channels, spokespersons, and response procedures.

Communication performance should be evaluated regularly using indicators such as stakeholder trust, message clarity, response time, engagement, and public sentiment.

9. Limitations and Future Research

This study used a cross-sectional design, meaning that data were collected at one point in time. Consequently, changes in organizational reputation over longer periods were not examined. The study also depended on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be influenced by individual perceptions.

Future research may use longitudinal designs to evaluate reputational changes over time. Researchers may also compare public and private organizations or examine specific sectors such as healthcare, education, banking, and government services. Additional variables—including organizational transparency, leadership communication, crisis preparedness, and social media engagement—could also be investigated.

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