

## The Effect of Public Relations on Governmental Hospital Performance In Jordan

**Author Detail: Sahar F. Abu- Jarour**

**Assistant Prof., University of Petra, College of Business and Management  
P.O. box 940396-Amman 11194 Jordan**

### **Abstract**

Public relations role in any organization plays a major role in distributing this organization in society. So, the objective of this research is to study the effect of public relationship on governmental hospitals performance in Jordan. Questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part used to collect demographic characteristics and the second to collect data about the effect of type of public relation and the performance of hospitals. The results showed that the role of public relations in public hospitals is not effective enough to promote these hospitals among society.

**Keywords: Public relations, Type of public relationships, hospital performance.**

### **1. Introduction**

Communication as a tool for public relation practice is central to the administration of all organizations. Through communication, public relations define the kind of relationship that exists between an organization and its publics. In their basic axiom about communication, Watzlawick *et al.*, (1967) argued that individual cannot communicate as the behaviour of human is considered a type of communication. This underscores the importance of communication in human society or organization. In building organization-public relationship, the public relation professional must evolve a participatory communication scheme in which both internal and external publics of the organisation recognise inputs and create a multi-dimensional flow of information to keep balance between partners. Concerning organization, public relations should not be limited to top-down but must, as a matter of necessity, pay particular attention to down-top flow, with input from all strata of the organisation and sharing the organization events with concerned customers. From customers perspective, relationships should be functioning positively to get their satisfaction of using the services provided to them (Wise, 2001). Public relations are an interactive form of communication in which the targeted audiences yield information and are not mere information consumers. Succinctly, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), in its official statement on Public Relations, described public relations as “helping our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony” (Hendrix, 2001, p.4). The major role of public relations include three functions. First management function that

creates, develops and carries out policies and programmes to influence opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product or an organization, as well as improves the mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the targeted groups (Wilcox *et al.*, 2001, p. 3). Second promoting of favourable image. In other words, the practice or profession establishes, maintains or improves a favourable relationship between an institution or person and the public (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999). Third, shaping public image i.e. the relationship between an organisation, or person and the public, with respect to whether the organisation or person is seen in a positive or negative light.

The image of an organization is impaired by various factors among which Abdulbaqi (2009) identifies as alienation of the target audience and their needs in policy formulation, non-participation of message receiver in message design, and wrong choice of media channels for dissemination of messages. This calls for an intervention of PR to amend the battered relationship between an organisation and its public. However, loyalty to the organization has to do with more than economic costs and benefits. The decision of the public is affected by emotional inclination and attitudinal preferences. Usually, people choose products and services because they feel comfortable with their continued use. This humanistic view can be explained by loyalty, which represents a long- term, committed and emotion oriented relationships (Toth & Trujillo, 1987).

Like all human endeavours, an organization is never devoid of crises, both internal and external. It now behoves an effective public relation practice to minimise crises in the organisation by employing creative Public Relation (PR) tools such as promotion, publicity, mobilization campaigns, conferences and other special event facilitates (Applegate, 2005). The success of

public relations in building a mutually beneficial organisation-public relationship would depend on a conscious application of the four phases of PR practice: Research, Objective, Programming and Evaluation (ROPE) (Abdulbaqi, 2009). This ensures the attainment of organizational and public goals among which are, creating and sustaining good image, identity, and effectiveness, establishing trust through openness, as well as adhering to the virtues of being socially responsible.

Zayany (2008) states that over the past few decades, public relations has developed significantly in the West into a sophisticated management function which is recognized as an integral part of any organization's attempt to communicate with various persons, both within and outside the organization, in order to achieve its goals and objectives. Broom and Dozier (1990) argued earlier that public relations programs affect the relationships between organizations and their publics, but rarely the program impact on the relationships themselves are measured, and over the years many have realized the importance of measuring the impact of public relations practices on the organization and its effectiveness. Grunig and Grunig (1992) stated that the role of public relation practice with two-way symmetrical model will lead for more effectiveness in the hospitals and this will create a good relationship and positive affect with the patients.

Indeed according to Center (2007), public relations have a responsibility toward the management and everyone else internal and external to the organization. This means that it is important for public relations to get the cooperation of people both inside and outside the organization in order to achieve the organization's objectives. In other words, when the organization is able to achieve its stated objectives, it can be said that the organization is effective. Grunig and Grunig (1992, p. 81) discussed that the concept of relationships between organizations and its stakeholders is central to their theory of public relations and organizational effectiveness. Organization effectiveness is necessary to protect the existence of the organization, and when the organization is effective it spills over onto the community and the public.

OP-R activities and functions can help the organization to be effective in achieving its stated goals and objectives. Indeed, within the context of O-PR, Grunig and Huang (2000) argue that public relations can help hospitals to be more effective by maintaining relationships with their strategic patients. And how can OP-R help achieve organization effectiveness? It is proposed here in this thesis that from the context of OP-R, organization effectiveness can be measured by

looking at whether the OP-R activities can help enhance the organization's image and identity (Haslam et al., 2003).

The PR practice in public organizations, such as hospitals in Jordan, is supposed to harmonise the various interests of all stake holders, in the health sector as well as those of health services consumers. Thus, this study is to assess the degree of effect of PR practices in building a favourable organization-public relationship in a bid to protect and promote the image and identity of the organisation. The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of public relationships on governmental hospitals in Jordan.

## **2. Methods**

This research was conducted on governmental hospitals in Jordan. Questionnaire was prepared for data collection. The questionnaire composed of two parts. The first part included demographic collection of data, while the second part included paragraphs asking about patients' attitudes to the role of PR in governmental hospitals using five Likert scale answers.

Simple random sample consisted of 300 patients were taken from governmental hospitals. The random sample was distributed on the northern, middle and southern region governmental hospitals in Jordan. The collected data were entered to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 for analysis.

## **3. Results**

### **Reliability**

Cronbach's Alpha reliability was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Table 1 shows the reliability results. The Cronbach's alpha reliability results was ranging from 0.903 to 0.983 which is more than 0.6 the accepted value for such studies (Sekaran, 2008).

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha reliability

<b>Dimensions of organization-public relationship</b>	0.970
Professional relationship	0.920
Personal relationship	0.910
Community relationship	0.903
<b>Organization effectiveness</b>	<b>0.938</b>
<b>All questionnaire</b>	<b>0.983</b>

### Demographic characteristics

The number of random sample of inpatients from public hospital was 300 patients. The ages of the sample concentrated in age categories 21-30 years with percentage 42.71 and 21-40 years with percentage 25.66%. More than two thirds of sample was in these two age categories (Table 2).

Most of sample was of females. The percentage of females' inpatients was 71.53%. This high percentage of female is a result that high percentage of inpatients is of women in hospitals at the time of running this research (Table 2). The high percentage of women is justified by the high percentage of housewives in the sample.

The distribution of job of respondents shows that most of respondent are housewives. The percentage of housewives is 53.08%. The second type of job among the sample was the private sector employees with percentage 15.64% followed by the public sector employees with percentage 12.83% (Table 2). The previous three categories form the majority of inpatients sample.

The educational level of the sample was concentrated in secondary educational level with percentage 42.00% and the primary educational level percentage 32.69% of the sample (Table 2). For the marital status, the results showed that majority of sample were married with percentage 76.27% and single with percentage 19.86.

Table 2: Characteristics of respondents (N=300)

Character	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 20 years	69	12.13
21-30 years	243	42.71
31-40 years	146	25.66
41-50 years	60	10.54
51 year or more	51	8.96
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	162	28.47
Female	407	71.53
<b>Job</b>		
Public sector employee	73	12.83
Private sector employee	89	15.64
Pension	24	4.22
Student	51	8.96
Housewife	302	53.08
Unemployed	30	5.27
<b>Educational level</b>		
Primary	186	32.69
Secondary	239	42.00
College diploma	73	12.83
B. Sc. Degree	63	11.07
Postgraduate	8	1.41
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	113	19.86
Married	434	76.27
Divorced	9	1.58
Widowed	13	2.28

### 1. Professional relationship

Inpatients show moderate attitudes for the professional relationships as the mean is 3.22 and standard deviation 1.15. The public hospitals do not involve in activities that promote the welfare of inpatients (3.07). The public hospitals do not care for inpatients' interest as their care for organization interests (3.20). Public hospitals do not devote resources to maintain its relationship with patients (3.28). The social responsibility of public hospitals did not reach optimal level (3.23). Also, the inpatients show that the hospital is honest to some extent does not reach the optimal level when dealing with patients (Table 3).

Table 3: Patients' attitudes to professional relationship

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. The hospital is involved in activities that promote the welfare of its customers.	3.07	1.18
2. The hospital acts in a socially responsible manner.	3.23	1.17
3. Public hospitals care of inpatients' interests and organization interests as the same.	3.20	1.18
4. The hospital is not honest in dealing with patients.	3.32	1.16
5. The hospital is not willing to devote resources to maintain its relationship with patients.	3.28	1.15
Professional relationship	3.22	1.02

### 2. Personal relationship

The evaluation of personal relationship was below the optimal level as the mean is 3.21 and standard deviation 1.00. The public hospitals do not take into account the patients convenience in their interaction with hospital (3.12). These hospitals do not invest in their customers (3.20), less trust of hospitals' announcement of what to do (3.24), lack of understanding patients as customers (3.29).

Table 4: Patients' attitudes to personal relationship

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. The patient feel he can trust the hospital to do what it says it will do.	3.24	1.21
2. The hospital seems kind to invest in its customers.	3.20	1.11
3. The hospital takes into account my convenience in all our interactions.	3.12	1.20
4. The hospital demonstrates interests in me as a person.	3.21	1.11
5. The hospital understands the patient as a customer.	3.29	1.18
Personal relationship	3.21	1.00

### 3. Community relationship

The public hospitals relation with community is low with mean 3.00 and standard deviation 0.99. The public hospitals lack the share of their plans for the future with their customers (2.80), the support things important to their customers (2.89), its openness about its plans for the future (2.93). The attitudes for the public hospital striving to improve communities of its customers was less negative with mean 3.16 but below the optimal level, also, the patients show that public hospitals play a role in their lives but below the optimal level (3.20).

Table 5: Patients' attitudes to community relationship

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. The hospital is open about its plans for the future.	2.93	1.16
2. The hospital support events which are important to its customers.	2.89	1.15
3. The hospital strives to improve the communities of its customers.	3.16	1.15
4. The hospital shares its plans for the future with customers.	2.80	1.21
5. The hospital actively plays a role in the lives communities it serves.	3.20	1.17
Community relationship	3.00	0.99

## Organization effectiveness

### 1. Image

The image of public hospitals was moderate with mean 3.34 and standard deviation 1.02. The lowest image was for "it gives me satisfaction to be associated with the hospital" with mean 3.17 and standard deviation 1.21. The other means of public hospitals image items ranged from 3.26 and 3.4 which reflects that image is below the optimal level for public hospitals.

Table 6: Patients' attitudes to hospital image

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. The hospital is a brand that I trust	3.35	1.21
2. The hospital brand is admirable.	3.26	1.19
3. It gives me satisfaction to be associated with the hospital.	3.17	1.21
4. The relationship between the value and price of treatment is good.	3.51	1.14
5. There is a reason to deal with this hospital instead of others.	3.40	1.23
Image	3.34	1.02

### 2. Identity

The evaluation of identity was low as the mean was 3.28 and standard deviation 1.00. The inpatients did not interest the public hospital with mean 2.91 and standard deviation. The evaluation of other items is moderate with means ranging from 3.21 to 3.67 which indicate that these items below the optimal level.

Table 7: Patients' attitudes to hospital identity

Item	Means	Standard Deviation
1. The hospital has personality, given that it provides symbolic to the patients.	3.28	1.21
2. The hospital is interesting.	2.91	1.27
3. I have a clear impression of the kind of persons who consume the hospital services.	3.30	1.12
4. The hospital has a rich history.	3.67	1.14
5. The hospital has emotional benefits to the patients.	3.21	1.27
Identity	3.28	1.00

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results show that the questionnaire of this research is reliable. The majority of sample was of females, because at the time of running this research most of inpatients in large governorate hospital in the three regions, north, middle and south were from females. The low educational level of the sample reflects that the visitors of the public hospitals are from the poor social class which forms high percentage of Jordanian population.

The previous results justifies the weak different type of relations the public hospital has either professional, personal or community relationships. If the accomplishment of factors of hospitals public relations is not completed this indicates that the patients' satisfaction for the relations build with them will be limited too.

The results show that there are strong relations between the factors of public relations and the type of relationship build with the effectiveness of organization represented in image and identity. In other words, the improvement of public relations factors at the hospital will help the hospital to improve the different type of relations and its effectiveness as a consequence.

## 5. References

- Abdulbaqi, S. S. (2009). *Public Relations as a tool for Mobilisation in resolving Niger Delta Crisis*. Nigeria: University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
- Applegate, E. (2005). *Strategic Copywriting: How to Create Effective Advertising*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Broom, G. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1990). *Using Research in Public Relations: Applications to Program Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organizationpublic relationship scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 157–170.
- Encarta World English Dictionary. (1999). *Anne Soukhanov, editor* (1 ed.): St. Martin's Press.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y.-H. (2000). *From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes*. In J.A. Ledingham & S.D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public Relations as Relationship Management: A Relational Approach to the Study and Practice of Public Relations*. Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ.
- Grunig, J., & Grunig, L. (1992). *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. Hillsdale,: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Haslam, S. A., Postmes, T., & Ellemers, N. (2003). More than a Metaphor: Organizational Identity Makes Organizational Life Possible. *British Journal of Management*, 14, 357–369.
- Hendrix, J. A. (2001). *Public Relations Cases*, : Wadsworth Thompson Learning, Belmont, CA.
- Toth, E. L., & Trujillo., N. (1987). Reinventing Corporate Communications. *Public Relations Review*, 13, 42-53.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., & Jackson, D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication*. New York: Norton.
- Wilcox, D. L., Ault, P. H., Agee, W. K., & Cameron, G. (2001). *Essentials of Public Relation*, . New York, NY.: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers.
- Wise, K. (2001). Opportunities for public relations research in public health. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 475-487.
- Zayani., M. (2008). Arab media, corporate communication and public relations: the case of AlJazeera. *Asian Journal of communication*, 18(3), 207-222.