

**Attitudes of media and communication students towards the
public relations job
Field study at the Faculty of Media and Communication,
Constantine University -3**

Received date: 04/03/2024 Accepted date:13/04/2024 Published date:24/06/2024

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Abstract:

This is a field study on the theme: “Attitudes of students in media and communication sciences towards the profession of public relations”. This is a profession whose role is still unclear in relation to the social and economic environment in Algeria, or even to the students of the specialty themselves. Despite this, the number of students wishing to train in this specialty is increasing. This arouses curiosity to reveal trends among students. The study was treated from a functional point of view, during which the Likert scale was applied. The study revealed a positive trend, despite the uncertainty surrounding the job.

Keywords: public relations; attitude; Job.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the theme “Attitudes of students in media and communication sciences towards the profession of public relations in Algerian institutions”. The study of a subject of this type is at the heart of the descriptive study which is interested in the distribution of attitudes within groups.

The subject of public relations is relatively recent, dating back to recent decades, when it was linked to the emergence of the society of consumption and abundance in the West. As for Algeria, public relations is practiced in one way or another, but it is not recognized as a profession.

2. Problematic:

This study addresses the topic of “student attitudes towards the public relations profession”. The subject requires a variable analysis that forms the attitudes of a specific social segment, which is the segment of students of the Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences at Constantine-3 University, towards the profession of public relations. We know that this sector is relatively new in Algerian universities compared to the journalism sector. It only appeared at the end of the 20th century. As for the professional level, the profession of public relations did not exist in the institutions because this profession is linked to the idea of not being convinced of the usefulness of the interest of the institution in general for the mental image formed by its customers and lack of the need to inform others of the service it provides. The task of the public relations manager is to



assume these roles, but no one in the Algerian institution assumes these roles. This is perhaps linked to the perception that has formed regarding the relationship of the institution with the environment that surrounds it, because it is clear that the absence of this profession stems from prejudices.

After independence, the state undertook the creation of major institutions. It was therefore he who determined jobs, and the main objective of the creation of institutions was production. Competition between institutions was not acceptable, and therefore the party that cared about its image was the political authority. However, the change that occurred in the 90s of the last century in the economy and the political system, with the beginning of the transition to a market economy and the privatization of the public sector, had a significant impact on the development of mechanisms of work.

Thus, the profession of public relations, which was not important at one time, began to be carried out in one form or another and could find its place over time on the map of new professions. Each stage of social and economic development requires jobs and occupations that may differ in status and importance at other stages. This is why this study is structured around the following question: what is the image that infocom students have about the job of public relations manager, and what are their attitudes towards future of this profession in organizations?

2.1 - The importance of the theme and the reasons for its choice:



Studying the subject of the public relations profession in Algeria is of great importance, because it is one of the new professions on the job market in Algeria with the transition to a market economy, which will change the mentality of owners of institutions, because it requires marketing the institution and its image in light of potential competition. In this context “ public relations build frameworks of trust and establish the reputation of the organization among its stakeholders and the public space.” (AIM & BILLIET , 2015)

From this point of view, the study of this subject is of great importance. As for the reasons which pushed me to choose it, they can be summed up by the fact that the profession of public relations is considered a new profession in Algerian society, and it is assumed that it is the result of a transition towards a market economy. The change created in me a scientific curiosity to carry out this study, to know the place of this profession.

2.2- Objectives of the study:

By conducting this study, we seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify the types of attitudes that were formed within the entire student group towards the task of the person responsible for public relations.

- Discover the motivations behind the growing demand among college students for the public relations major.

2.3 -Hypotheses:

This study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

A - There is a positive attitude among college students toward public relations training.

B - There are moral motivations among students who wish to pursue studies in public relations.

C- There is ambiguity among college students regarding the role of public relations in organizations.

2.4- Perspective of the study:

In this study I relied on functionalism, because it is a paradigm that has a fundamental characteristic, which is to focus on the analysis of the functional interdependence of systems in light of the roles and positions occupied by the individuals. (Defleur, 1989). In light of this perspective, I will attempt to analyze the different functions performed by public relations managers, to identify students' attitudes towards the ability of the public relations profession to integrate within organization and reveal the extent of students' abilities. recognize the role, function and importance of the public relations profession within the system..

2.5-.Define the concepts:

Ivy Lee, who is the father of public relations, defines it as a major institution that requires studying the current conditions, working towards reform and informing people about it. Its mission is twofold, it begins by studying trends in public opinion, urging institutions to change their plans and modify their policies to serve the public (AIM & BILLIET, 2015) interest, and then informing people about what the institutions that interest them are doing and serve their interests. (Chadwen, 2005)

Through this definition, Ivy Lee focuses on the functional aspect of public relations.



therefore “public relations aim to build and maintain image and notoriety, they aim to modify the point of view and behavior of targeted audiences” (Jézéquel & Gérard, 2008) .A new form of public relations has emerged, based on communication with public opinion and aimed at establishing the legitimacy of the company, preventing criticism and preserving the interests of the company in the event of a crisis” (Lendrevie , De Baynast , & Rion, 2004). In another definition, public relations activities are defined as the non-advertising activities carried out by the company with the aim of establishing, maintaining or developing good relations with its various publics (Scibetta, Kempf, & Alves, 2009) .

So it's useful to add the continuity of the relationship between the institution and its community

2.6-Study method:

This study belongs to descriptive studies because it seeks to identify trends and collect data on the subject studied (Angers). It is a quantitative approach that relies on the application of statistical coefficients, since the aim of the study is to identify the quality and intensity of trends. among middle school students and to collect data and facts on the profession of public relations and the students' perception of the way in which public relations is practiced in Algerian organizations.

2.7-Data collection tool:

In this study, trend measurement was used as a field data collection tool. The form included two types of data:

A - Personal data: This type of data includes demographic aspects such as age, gender, level and the professions they wish to pursue after obtaining their diploma.

B - Attitude scale: Measuring the students' attitude towards the public relations profession constitutes the essential part of the questionnaire .To prepare this scale, we relied on the Likert scale. The Likert scale is based on developing a group of statements related to the tendency to be measured, and degrees of agreement or opposition are placed in front of each statement.

There are five levels: strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree and completely disagree, and the respondent must express their level of attitude towards each statement.

The Likert scale was followed in this study because it is more accurate than those of Turston and Guttman, as it is more fertile in terms of providing information and it does not require referees. (Grawitz, 1976)

The degree weighting method was used to make the scale units equal in size.

The scale prepared to study the topic included 13 statements. In terms of linguistic form, there are positive and negative statements, the rejection of which indicates the positive attitude of students towards the profession of public relations.

Negative expressions are those containing numbers:

2, 4, 11, 12, 13.

Expressions in positive form are those containing numbers:

3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14.

2.8-Field of study:



This study was carried out at the Faculty of Media, Communication and Audiovisual Sciences of the University of Constantine-3, created by decree in 2011. The Faculty is made up of three departments: the Department of Communication and Public Relations, Audiovisual Department, and the Department of Journalism. The training offers offered by the faculty are:

- The first cycle of the Bachelor: Communication, Media.
- The second stage is the Master: Communication and Public Relations, Audiovisual, Print and Electronic Journalism.
- The third step: Doctorate: Media and Communication.

Students are guided towards the three training offers according to their desires and the availability of educational places. There is also a growing desire among students to pursue "Public Relations", since the Department of Communication and Public Relations has the largest number of students and the department has 442 students. This growing trend is due to the desire for the specialty in communication and public relations, to the job opportunities that this specialty is supposed to offer. Students are showing a growing interest in training there.

2.9-Study sample:

In this study, an equally quota sample was adopted, because thanks to this sample, the research population was divided into homogeneous classes in terms of common characteristics of the studied population categories, and the study sample was selected from students from the Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences. The sample was divided into four groups representative of the research community: common core students, as well as

third-year students in communication, and first and second year master's students in public relations. The Department of Communication and Public Relations was chosen to try to identify trends towards the specialty as well as to find out to what extent students know the job of the public relations manager and the image that has formed in their minds on the practice of public relations in Algerian organizations. The sample includes 60 items, equally distributed among the aforementioned categories, so that each category includes 15 items, as shown in the following table:

Table(1): shows the distribution of sample elements according to academic level

Target group	repetition	%
Common core	15	25
bachlor	15	25
Master -1	15	25
Master -2	15	25
Total	60	100

3 - Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data:

The attitude scale adopted in this study to measure students' attitudes towards the public relations profession includes negative content statements and positive statements towards the public relations profession.

Positive statements were scored from 1 to 5, from very negative to very positive, and the opposite was assigned to

negative statements, where scores were assigned from 1 to 5 in a gradation from very positive to very negative.

Statistical standards were also used to measure differences between the responses of members of the study sample, including calculating mean scores and percentages.

We present the results of the study below through the following tables.

Table (2): presents the response to the statement: I believe that public relations is a profession whose time has not yet come for Algerian society.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	13	13	21.66
support	27	54	45
I don't know	2	6	3.33
opposite	12	48	20
Strongly opposed	6	30	10
total	151	60	100
SMA	2.51		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table No. (2) indicates that 45% of the sample supports the idea and 21.66% strongly supports it. This confirms the impression that there is a feeling that the public relations profession has not yet played its role in Algerian society.

The result of the table also shows that the average score obtained by responding to the statement amounts to 2.51 out of 5

degrees, a value lower than the average score of 3 degrees on the Likert scale, which confirms the lack of conviction of the sample on the importance of the public relations profession at the present time.

Table (3): shows the response to the statement: I think the public relations profession is not understood by most people.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	24	24	40
support	36	72	60
I don't know	0	0	0
opposite	0	0	0
Strongly opposed	0	0	0
total	60	96	100
SMA	1.6		

Source: Prepared by researcher

Table3 shows that all members of the sample, without exception, support the idea. While 40% strongly support it and 60% support it. The sample members believe that the public relations profession is not understood by most people, meaning that what is expected of it is unknown. This confirms the negative trend which reflects the fact that this profession is new in Algerian society and itself requires a public relations campaign. The average score obtained by each individual in the sample, which amounts to 1.60, reveals the extent of the negative trend towards the public relations profession within the company.

Table (4) : presents the response to the statement: Public relations is practiced in Algerian organisations in an unprofessional manner.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	14	70	23.33
support	19	76	31.66
I don't know	17	51	28.33
opposite	7	14	11.66
Strongly opposed	3	3	5
total	60	214	100
SMA	3.61		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table 4 indicate that a significant group of the sample, i.e. 28.33%, does not have a clear orientation towards the idea that public relations is practiced in Algerian organizations in an unprofessional manner. This percentage confirms at least one thing, which is the ignorance of organizations about the role of public relations. However, the general average of the scores obtained by each individual in the study sample is 3.61 Which means that the trend of the sample in general is towards the lack of professionalism of the practice of public relations in Algerian organizations.

Table (5) : shows the response to the statement: I believe that organizations that deal with a large audience should create a public relations department

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	42	210	70
support	16	64	26.66
I don't know	0	0	0
opposite	0	0	0
Strongly opposed	2	2	3.33
total	60	276	100
SMA	4.6		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table 5 indicates that the overwhelming majority of sample members (70% of them strongly support and 26.66% support the idea). Therefore, the sample members support the idea that it is necessary to create public relations departments within organizations that address a broad audience, i.e. organizations that provide direct services to the general public . The average score obtained by each individual in the sample was 4.6 out of 5 possible scores, which indicates that there is a very strong tendency towards this idea of creating public relations departments within organizations, particularly the most large.

Table (6): shows the response to the statement: Some think that public relations will help to improve the image of the Algerian organization among the public, better than advertising.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	12	60	20
support	33	132	55
I don't know	10	30	16.66
opposite	2	4	3.33
Strongly opposed	3	3	5
total	60	229	100
SMA	3.81		

Source: Prepared by researcher

Table No. (6) shows that the majority of members of the study sample (20% of them strongly support and 55% of them in turn support the idea). They believe that the public relations activity will contribute to improving the image of Algerian organizations and that the implementation method will be better than advertising. Because public relations is based on direct communication, that is, human interaction, it will therefore be more convincing than the methods on which advertising relies. We note the degree of support for the idea thanks to the arithmetic average of the score, which amounts to 3.81 out of 5 degrees.

Table (7):shows the response to the statement: I think it is time for the Algerian organization to focus on the relationship with the environment.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	36	180	60
support	22	88	36.66
I don't know	0	0	0
opposite	0	0	0
Strongly opposed	2	2	3.33
total	270	60	100
SMA	4.5		

Source: Prepared by researcher

It is clear from the data in Table No. 7 that the majority of members of the study sample (60% strongly in favor and 36.66%) support the idea that the time has come for Algerian organizations to concentrate on establishing relationships with the social and economic environment. This vision contributes to changing the Algerian mentality which remains focused on relationships within the organization more than on its relationships with the external environment

Table (8): presents the response to the statement: The spread of tensions in Algerian organizations is due to the absence of the role of public relations.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	20	100	33.33
support	25	100	41.66
I don't know	12	36	20
opposite	3	6	5
Strongly opposed	0	0	0
total	60	242	100
SMA	4.03		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table 8 indicate that most members of the study sample (33.3% who strongly support and 41.66% who support), explain the reason for the spread of tensions in Algerian organizations through The absence of the public relations function which eliminates misunderstandings and strengthens relationships between organizations and their internal publics. the average score of 4.03 out of 5 possible scores on the scale confirms the firm belief of the study sample in the existence of the relationship between tensions in organizations and low public relations activity within organizations Algerians.

Table (9): shows the response to the statement: I believe that most Algerian organizations do not give public relations the importance they deserve.

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	30	30	50
support	19	38	31.66
I don't know	2	6	3.33
opposite	9	36	15
Strongly opposed	0	0	0
total	60	110	100
SMA	1.83		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table 9 reveals that the majority of members of the study sample (50% of strongly supportive and 31.66% of sympathetic) believe that most Algerian organizations do not care about public relations activities. The average score of 1.83 shows that there is a weak tendency among each member of the sample, which The conviction of the interviewees in this idea confirms that the public relations activity is still a secondary activity in the eyes of the responsible.

Table (10) shows the response to the statement: I believe that the training of public relations students lacks contact with reality

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	25	25	41.66
support	23	46	38.33
I don't know	4	12	6.66
opposite	2	8	3.33
Strongly opposed	6	30	10
total	60	60	100
SMA	2.01		

Source: Prepared by researcher

From the data in Table No. 10, it is clear that the majority of members of the study sample (41.66% strongly in favor and 38.33% in favor) believe that the student's training in the field of public relations lacks contact with reality. The strength of the trend confirms the desire of students to link scientific training with practice and interaction with media institutions in general. As for the field of public relations, this activity requires the acquisition of experience in the field of human relations and communication skills which can only come in contact with living reality.

Table (11) shows the response to the statement: It would be better to modify the study programs related to public relations in Algerian universities in the direction of more field training

Trend Type	Frequency	W.Frequency	%
Strongly supportive	51	255	85
support	6	24	10
I don't know	3	9	5
opposite	0	0	0
Strongly opposed	0	0	0
total	60	288	100
SMA	4.8		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The data in Table No. 11 shows that the majority of the study sample (85% strongly in favor and 10% in favor) believe that it is better to modify the study programs related to public relations in the sense of providing greater opportunities for students in the field. training in organizations by carrying out internships on public relations activities. This belief is firmly anchored among the members of the study sample.

3.1-Results:

This study concluded the following results:

After calculating the average intensity of attitude towards the public relations profession at the level of each axis of the scale, it was found that the share of each individual in the sample of the prepared scale is 3, 34 out of 5 possible degrees.

Although this result indicates a positive trend toward the public relations profession among the sample members, this trend is not

strong enough. It does not clearly indicate that the profession of public relations is booming in Algerian organizations, but it expresses a strong desire among students of the specialty.

- Regarding the understanding of the philosophy of public relations, the average intensity of the tendency for statements in this axis reaches 3.15 degrees out of 5 possible degrees. This result confirms that the orientation of the sample towards the idea of public relations is clear among the members of the sample, although there are some gaps regarding the dimensions and nature of public relations.

As for the image in which public relations is practiced in Algerian institutions, the testimonies on this axis indicate that the average response reached 3.52 out of 5 possible degrees. This study confirms through its response that the community of researchers in general is experiencing a positive trend towards the practice of public relations and that the need for it has become essential in Algerian institutions.

Regarding the study of public relations, statistical data reveals that the average marks obtained by the sample studied amount to 3.40 out of 5 possible marks. This statement indicates that the sample studied has a positive attitude towards training in the field of public relations at the Algerian university. However, he calls for linking this training to the Algerian reality through internships within institutions.

3.2- Results in view of hypotheses:

Returning to the hypotheses from which the study began, we note the following:

- Regarding the first hypothesis, which states: “There are positive attitudes among students towards training in the practice of public relations in institutions.” The results of the study indicate its validity, because the sample’s response to the testimonies allocated for this purpose was somewhat positive. Perhaps the feeling of this need is due to the fact that the training offered at the university under study is academic and not vocational, that is, it has no connection to the world of work.
- As for the second hypothesis, which states: “There are moral motives among students to pursue the study of public relations,” the results of the study confirm the validity of this hypothesis also through the positive trend of the study sample towards specializing in public relations. This result reflects the reality of the demand for training offers at the College of Media and Communication, as the public relations major is the most attractive to students more than others.
- As for the third hypothesis, which states: “There is ambiguity among students about the role of public relations in organizations.” The results of this study confirm that the sample members have an idea about the philosophy of public relations, even though it is not completely clear. This gap can be explained by the shortcomings in the training program in this major.

4. CONCLUSION

It appears from this study that there is a lack of understanding of the role of public relations, and there is no clear reference to the profession of public relations manager in the Algerian labor code. There is no doubt that this ambiguity surrounding this



profession is due to the economic model followed after independence. Algerian universities were also relatively late in opening training offers in this area. Furthermore, most of the training offers offered remain essentially academic and professional training offers are rare.

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