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THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN UNIVERSITIES AMID DIGITALIZATION: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS –UNIVERSITY OF GUELMA AS A MODEL

مستقبل العلاقات العامة في الجامعات في ظل الرقمنة: التحديات والحلول

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Abstract:

In light of the increasing significance of digitization in public relations within higher education institutions, this study examines the key challenges faced by universities in adopting digital strategies for public relations. The research aimed to assess the current state of digitization and gather insights from faculty members, students, and administrative staff. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences was selected as the study site, with data collected using surveys and interviews.

The results revealed the extent to which the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has embraced digitization in its public relations strategies, both at the administrative and educational levels. The university provides the necessary tools and devices that facilitate the digital workflow and help students effectively complete their academic tasks. However, several challenges were identified, including the need for cultural shifts within the organization, data security concerns, and the financial costs of implementation. Successfully achieving digital transformation requires continuous efforts to overcome these challenges and maximize the benefits of digital technologies in enhancing both academic and administrative services. As a result, we recommend prioritizing investments in infrastructure, technology, and modern digital systems to support learning, teaching, and university management.

Keywords: Digitization, Public Relations, Challenges, University Institutions.

الملخص:

نظرا للأهمية البالغة التي حظيت بها الرقمنة في مجال العلاقات العامة ضمن المؤسسات الجامعية قمنا بتناول هذا الموضوع لدراسة أهم التحديات التي تواجه المؤسسات الجامعية في تبني الرقمنة ضمن استراتيجيات العلاقات العامة، حيث هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على واقع الرقمنة والتعرف على وجهة نظر الأساتذة والطلبة والإداريين، حيث تم اختيار كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم الاعتماد على أداة استمارة الاستبيان والمقابلة لجمع البيانات. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة مدى تبني كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية لمشروع الرقمنة في مجال العلاقات العامة على المستوى الإداري والبيداغوجي حيث أن الجامعة توفر معدات وأجهزة تسهل العمل بالرقمنة وتساعد الطلبة في إتمام مهامهم الأكاديمية بفعالية، لكنها تواجه جملة من التحديات تشمل تغيرات في الثقافة التنظيمية وتأمين البيانات والتكلفة، فتحقيق التحول الرقمي يتطلب جهود مستمرة لتجاوز هذه التحديات والاستفادة القصوى من فوائد التكنولوجيا الرقمية في تحسين الخدمات الأكاديمية والإدارية، وعليه قمنا باقتراح مجموعة من التوصيات أهمها تخصيص موارد كافية للاستثمار في البنية التحتية والتقنية والأنظمة الرقمية الحديثة التي تدعم التعلم و التدريس والإدارة الجامعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرقمنة، العلاقات العامة، التحديات، المؤسسات الجامعية.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every activity in life depends on human behavior within various societies. For such activities to be successful and sustainable, it is essential to understand how to effectively engage with the surrounding environment. Public relations play a crucial role in this, being an administrative field that has gained widespread acceptance, particularly in developed countries, as a means to create, maintain, and strengthen effective relationships and communication between an organization and its various stakeholders, both internal and external. Public relations also aims to shape a positive public image of the organization, its goals, and the services it provides to society. Thus, public relations serves as a vital communication link and an active tool for engagement both inside and outside the organization.

As public relations is an administrative discipline, it cannot remain isolated from new developments and innovations in communication technologies. If it does, it risks becoming ineffective and detached from the surrounding changes. In response to the evolving communication landscape, public relations practices have adapted, with digitization emerging as a key factor. Digitization, which involves the use of computers, the internet, and electronic applications, has significantly contributed to modernizing management, enhancing public services, and shifting from traditional management to digital management. It provides new opportunities for communication, promotion, public engagement, employee training, and enhanced transparency and responsiveness in public relations. Thus, it is vital to develop robust digital strategies to fully harness these opportunities.

Despite its benefits, digitization faces several challenges, including the need to keep pace with rapidly advancing technologies and continuous updates. Additionally, there are various other challenges across different fields that must be addressed effectively to fully capitalize

on the advantages of digitization.

At its core, digitization is a fundamental component of digital transformation, which has become essential for all organizations seeking to improve their services and facilitate easier access for beneficiaries. Digital transformation is not merely the application of technology within an organization; it is a comprehensive process that impacts both internal operations and the delivery of services to the public, making them faster and more efficient. Countries worldwide have responded to this transformation, tailoring their approach based on their unique circumstances, capabilities, and priorities. While developed countries have successfully implemented digital transformation, developing countries face more significant challenges due to a higher need for change but lower adaptation capacity.

In this context, Algeria is among the countries that have begun applying digitization in various institutions, aiming to modernize management and introduce advanced technologies to achieve more accurate and effective results, including in its academic institutions. These institutions are at the heart of scientific and technological research and house the human and material resources that require comprehensive technologies to streamline university operations, provide better services, and achieve higher levels of progress. Therefore, digitization represents the optimal solution, offering advanced features and significantly improving efficiency in achieving results. Thus, we pose the following question:

What are the challenges faced by university institutions in adopting digitization within their public relations strategies?

This central question is followed by a set of sub-questions:

1. How is digitization implemented at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of 8 May 1945, Guelma?
2. What digital tools and techniques are

used in public relations at the faculty?

3. What challenges does the Algerian university face in keeping up with digitization and implementing it within its pedagogical and administrative structures?

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The significance of this study stems from the importance of the topic itself, as we aim to uncover the challenges associated with digitization in the field of public relations within academic institutions. Every topic carries importance from both theoretical and practical perspectives:

- Improving educational and research processes by providing advanced technological tools for distance learning, enhancing the student experience through interactive learning platforms, and streamlining academic processes for both students and faculty.
- The growing academic interest in digitization over recent decades and the rapid developments in information and communication technology, commonly known as the technological explosion. These advancements, resulting from scientific discoveries, have saved time and effort while facilitating the distribution of knowledge and information within society.
- Shedding light on the challenges digitization presents in navigating the information revolution and communication technologies.
- Highlighting the vital role of digitization in advancing university institutions.
- Identifying the needs and areas for improvement in universities' digital public relations strategies.
- Encouraging the adoption of digital advancements in public relations within university institutions.
- The widespread implementation of digitization across all sectors—economic, social, cultural, and political—that influence the lives of individuals and society, creating what is known as the digital environment, which demands

engagement and cannot be avoided.

Study Objectives:

For a study to hold scientific value, it must have clear goals or objectives to achieve. By choosing this topic, we aim to accomplish the following objectives:

- To explore the relationship between digitization and public relations.
- To enrich the discussion on digitization in both its theoretical and practical aspects.
- To evaluate the success of digitization projects within university institutions.
- To examine the effects of digital public relations on university institutions.
- To assess the state of digitization at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and gather perspectives from its staff.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is classified as descriptive and analytical research. Accordingly, we adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, combining two fundamental scientific methods: the analytical method and the descriptive method. The descriptive method serves as the foundation for studying the phenomenon, while the analytical method aids in understanding, analyzing, and identifying effective solutions, ensuring the success of the research process. We decided to rely on the descriptive method to extract relevant literature and identify the connections between digitization, digital media, and their role in achieving the goals and activities of university institutions. Moreover, the descriptive approach helps highlight the roles of public relations practitioners and improve their effectiveness. The data collected at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of 8 May 1945, Guelma, where the study was conducted, was utilized in this analysis.

Additionally, we applied the case study approach, which is a research method aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon through a detailed study of one or more specific cases. This method uses a range of tools and techniques for data collection and analysis, allowing

for a thorough understanding of the studied phenomenon. We applied this methodology to examine the case of university institutions in Algeria after adopting the digitization system.

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The research community consists of students from the Faculty of Humanities at the University of 8 May 1948, Guelma, with a total of 2,938 individuals (students) from various disciplines and academic levels. The questionnaire was distributed to these students, as they are directly involved in facing digital challenges. The study also includes faculty staff working in the administration, as they play a role in digitization and its implementation within the university's administrative functions.

STUDY SAMPLE

For this study, we employed a purposive sampling method, selecting individuals based on specific characteristics that are relevant and critical to the study. This approach is used when the necessary data for the study is available from a particular group within the original population.

We used purposive sampling because our research focuses on the internal community of the Faculty of Humanities in Guelma. We specifically targeted this internal audience, which includes administrators, staff, and students from the Humanities Department, to gather comprehensive responses for the student questionnaire and conduct interviews with (the Dean of the Faculty, the Deputy Dean, and the heads of departments). Therefore, we selected a purposive sample of 223 students.

RESEARCH TOOLS

In this study, we used the following research tools:

Questionnaire:

We primarily used the questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire consists of a set of carefully and precisely formulated questions, designed with objective criteria. These questions aim to address the hypotheses put forward in our

study and the corresponding indicators. We used a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions, known for their accuracy, guiding respondents to select from predefined options. Additionally, some open-ended questions were included to allow respondents the freedom to express their opinions. The questionnaire was designed specifically for the study topic, with sections based on the research questions, and was distributed to the students involved in this study.

Interview:

The interview method was employed with various officials within the target research community. It is a research tool that follows scientific principles and is used in the context of addressing a specific research problem with a well-defined plan. The researcher utilizes this method to gather the required information and data from respondents, following a systematic approach.

2. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

2.1 Definition Of Digitization

Said Yaqtin defines digitization as the process of converting paper documents into a digital format. This process transforms documents, files, or texts into numbers and symbols. This digital conversion allows any document, regardless of type, to be accessed and viewed on electronic devices, with the content displayed on a computer screen. In the context of long-distance communication, digitization refers to converting continuous analog signals into digital form. ¹

Digitization is also defined as a managerial strategy for modernizing information to improve services for citizens and institutions. It involves the optimal use of available information sources by leveraging physical, human, and intellectual resources within a modern electronic framework, enabling efficient use of time, effort, and financial resources to achieve the desired objectives with the necessary quality. ²

Digitization in Higher Education: This refers to recognizing organizational changes driven

by digital technologies and business models that aim to enhance institutional performance and deliver better services to clients.³

Operational Concept of Digitization: This involves transforming information and data from its traditional paper form into a digital format based on a series of numbers, which facilitates faster and more accurate storage, processing, and transmission of information.

2.2 Concept Of Public Relations

The definitions of public relations vary according to the disciplines and systems that utilize them. One of the key definitions, offered by French experts in public relations, is: "It is a specific goal, namely the identification and implementation of an ongoing communication policy that establishes proactive and safe relationships with both internal and external audiences. Public relations must integrate with all administrative functions."⁴

Philip Kotler defines public relations as: "Any program aimed at building a positive image for the organization, improving its relationships with stakeholders, and eliminating rumors and negative events that impact the organization."

Rashwan suggests that some books define public relations with the following equation:⁵

$$\text{Good performance} + \text{truthful news} = \text{Effective public relations}$$

The Operational Concept Of Public Relations

It is a vital administrative function, planned by a team, aimed at establishing a trust-based relationship between employees and management, or between the public and the organization.

2.3 Concept Of University Institutions

University institutions are places where ideas and opinions are exchanged among the parties involved in the educational process. They provide spaces where students and professors engage in dialogue and discuss important issues related to education.

Furthermore, universities are social, cultural, and scientific entities that play a vital role in preserving, developing, disseminating, and advancing knowledge, as well as fostering creative talents.⁶

3. BENEFITS OF DIGITIZATION

Digital transformation brings numerous benefits aimed at enhancing performance and improving the quality of services for the public, clients, and both public and private institutions, as well as businesses. Some of the notable benefits include:⁷

3.1 Economic Benefits

- Saving time, money, and effort for all parties interacting electronically, and significantly reducing the financial costs previously incurred in e-government operations.
- Supporting economic development programs by facilitating transactions between the public and private sectors, which leads to increased profitability.
- Creating new job opportunities in emerging fields such as data entry, infrastructure management and maintenance, and information security.
- Consolidating efforts under a single electronic portal, thus avoiding the fragmentation and duplication of procedures found in traditional government systems.
- Opening new investment opportunities through the integration of e-government with e-commerce, using the same applications, technologies, and internal data exchange mechanisms.

3.2 Administrative Benefits

- Organizing production processes and improving operational efficiency.
- Eliminating bureaucracy and the inefficiencies typical of traditional government systems.
- Promoting transparency, eliminating favoritism, nepotism, and political favoritism.
- Streamlining the lengthy hierarchical

structure typically found in traditional government, speeding up administrative processes and reducing delays.

- Establishing new work standards and creating a working environment that is drastically different from that of the traditional government.

4. FACTORS FOR THE SUCCESS OF DIGITIZATION

Officials in both government and private institutions who wish to transition to administrative digitization must consider several key factors for success within the organization, including:

- Achieving electronic documentation for various administrative transactions, thereby eliminating paper archives that are vulnerable to damage and falsification.
- A clear strategic vision and a thorough understanding of administrative digitization, including the phases of planning, implementation, production, operation, and development.
- Continuous improvement of work processes and ensuring that employees clearly understand them.
- The ability to understand and align with the objectives of digitization, with an emphasis on documenting and categorizing them.
- Enhancing the performance levels of services.
- Simplifying administrative processes.
- Reducing costs and ensuring administrative transparency.
- Providing training and professional development, and securing the necessary training resources for all employees according to their specialization.
- Ensuring the confidentiality of information for beneficiaries.
- Drawing lessons from past experiences and avoiding repeating mistakes.
- Continuously updating information technology for the benefit of users.⁸

5. EFFECTS OF DIGITIZATION

Digitization has both positive and negative

effects, which can be summarized as follows:

5.1 Positive Effects Of Digitization

The implementation of digitization leads to various positive outcomes, including:

- Faster responses to researchers' inquiries, as automated systems can quickly conduct searches within a short time frame.
- Easy access to information, with the ability to perform diverse automated searches using keywords, and the option to access information remotely.
- Speed and ease of accessing data.
- Information security: The digitization process ensures the complete and secure transfer of data during conversion.
- It helps delay and reduce the deterioration of original copies, which is typically caused by frequent use.
- Multiple researchers can view the same document simultaneously.
- The preservation of original copies for extended periods and reduced degradation by using digitized documents as substitutes.

5.2 Negative Effects Of Digitization

- Unemployment: The widespread adoption of digitization may contribute to rising unemployment, as many jobs are replaced by technology. At the very least, the need to hire new employees may decrease due to the speed, ease, and efficiency of digitized processes.
- Loss of privacy: Digital systems may allow people to access others' private information. For instance, it's possible to check gas and electricity consumption by entering a phone number or user ID associated with an electricity bill.
- The rise of electronic espionage.
- Increased dependence on foreign technology: As many modern technologies come from abroad.⁹

6. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations operate based on a set of core principles that guide its practices. Built

on ethical standards, public relations aim to attract attention, foster trust and credibility, and promote mutual understanding. Public relations management, both as a department and as specialists, seeks to gain support, influence public opinion, and change attitudes. To achieve these goals, public relations must begin internally within the organization. The following are the key principles of public relations:

- Public relations begin within the organization: This means there must be mutual understanding between the organization and its employees at all levels. Improving the relationship with the internal audience is the foundation for a successful relationship with the external audience, as the image of the external audience is simply a reflection of the internal audience's image.¹⁰
- Public relations is a consultative function: The public relations manager advises leadership, encouraging decisions and policies that resonate with the public, while cautioning against policies that may not be well-received. However, the manager is not obligated to enforce recommendations. Thus, public relations are the responsibility of senior management, even when a separate unit handles these activities. Nevertheless, the public relations manager still has execution authority within their unit.¹¹
- Presenting facts, honesty, and clarity: This is vital for gaining the trust of the public because concealing facts may provide temporary success, but this is short-lived, and the truth will eventually emerge, causing the public to lose confidence in the organization. Additionally, hiding facts allows space for misinformation and rumors, which can damage the organization's public interests and create confusion among its audience.¹²
- Raising awareness, respecting others, and believing in the power of public opinion: Public relations is built on explaining the organization's policies and development plans. It guides public opinion and

encourages public support for organizational policies by informing the public about activities. The more knowledgeable employees are, the more committed they become, leading to effective results in dealing with the public.¹³

- The dynamism of public relations: Public relations are characterized by a dynamic and interactive exchange, meaning its activities are proactive in both influencing and being influenced. This is achieved through media strategies to shape public opinion and overcome obstacles. Public relations maintain ethical principles, primarily honesty, and are consistently dynamic, involving ongoing evaluations. These efforts begin within the organization, as external relations can only thrive if internal relations are secure.¹⁴
- Adopting scientific research methods: This means applying logical, objective approaches to solving problems and making informed decisions based on reality. Public relations management begins with information collection, problem analysis, and understanding public attitudes, followed by creating strategies that are supported by research studies.
- Contributing to societal well-being: "Society's well-being is a general goal pursued by all institutions. Therefore, every institution must align its objectives with the broader goals of society to achieve harmony between both."¹⁵

7. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

While the internet has revolutionized many professions, it has also introduced new applications in the field of public relations. In the past, public relations professionals relied almost exclusively on the media to deliver messages to target audiences. However, the internet has created new opportunities for direct, two-way communication between organizations and their audiences. Online public relations involves organizations using internet technologies to engage with key audiences,

including customers, consumers, employees, investors, community members, and the media.

Looking at studies related to digitization and the internet, it can be said that the internet and the World Wide Web have radically transformed public relations. A study by Bloom in 1999 concluded that the internet and public relations are highly complementary, as both focus on establishing communication with target audiences and fostering individual relationships among them.¹⁶

The new media created by the internet has had both positive and negative effects on the public relations profession. The negative aspects, as mentioned earlier, can lead to crises. To avoid such challenges, public relations experts in organizations must monitor new media continuously.

Organizations can now reach their target audiences via the internet at any time and directly share messages with them, eliminating the need for gatekeepers or intermediaries between the organization and its audience.

The internet has also provided significant advantages to public relations practitioners by enabling them to conduct research, collect, and store information about customers, the media, competitors, and their industry quickly. Additionally, it has become easier to grow, measure, and evaluate online public relations research. This system has given public relations professionals faster access to a wealth of information at a lower cost.

The internet has provided various applications for public relations, including emails, blogs, online monitoring and measurement, sales promotions, online investor relations, customer relationship management, and online media relations. The World Wide Web is the first public relations tool that allows direct communication between organizations and their audiences, without relying on news media, journalists, or editors.

The emergence of the internet has significantly changed how public relations

practitioners distribute information, interact with their target audiences, and manage crises. The internet has also altered the legal landscape in which public relations operates, as organizations must invest in securing their devices and software to improve security and reduce vulnerabilities.

In general, the internet has brought new tools and conveniences to public relations. Internet applications are now used across nearly all aspects of public relations, such as meeting with target audiences at any time, interacting, dialoguing, promoting, managing crises, maintaining a positive image, and managing an organization's brand. Additionally, failure to strategically utilize the internet and the new channels it provides can lead to serious problems and even jeopardize the organization's existence. Therefore, public relations activities in this fast, flexible, and cost-effective digital environment should be scientifically evaluated by practitioners.¹⁷

8. CONTRIBUTION OF DIGITIZATION TO THE MODERNIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND PEDAGOGICAL AREAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Recently, several administrative and pedagogical areas within Algeria's higher education and scientific research sector have experienced significant advancements following the introduction of digitization. Key developments include:¹⁸

Digitization of University Registrations

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has created unified platforms for all new students who have passed the Baccalaureate exam. These platforms provide initial registration services, direct students to university institutions interactively, and ensure they can access orientation results, submit and review complaints, and finalize registration with confirmation.

In line with instructions from the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the

national digital platform "Progres" has also been made available for Bachelor's degree holders wishing to apply for Master's programs.

Another area that has been digitized is the PhD application process. The Ministry has introduced the "Progress" platform for PhD applications, which offers many benefits, including simplifying the application file creation process and ensuring fair processing for all candidates.

Digitization of University Libraries

Through digital technologies, university libraries have been modernized, converting their collections to digital format for optimal usage, both onsite and remotely. This has improved access to national resources and established a network enabling remote library connections, facilitating collaboration and linking to the national university network. Efforts are also underway to create a virtual university library.

Digitization of the National Documentation System

With support from the Scientific and Technical Research Center (Cerist), the Ministry has implemented a national digital documentation system (Sndi), enabling researchers at Algerian universities to access a vast digital database containing books, theses, and scientific journals in digital format. Additionally, online portals like "Bibliouniv" for university libraries, the national thesis notification portal, and the Algerian scientific journals portal (Asjp) have been developed. These portals are part of a national information system designed to protect researchers from fraudulent publishing sites and opportunistic publishers.

Digitization of Pedagogical Management and University Services

Tracking student progress, managing exams, issuing certificates, and other administrative functions are now managed digitally at Algerian higher education institutions. University services such as accommodation, catering, and transportation are also digitized, with an online platform for new

students to register for these services.

Digitization of Pedagogical Production through Digital Educational Content

Efforts have been focused on updating pedagogical content, teaching methods, and curricula. There has been a concerted push to produce digital educational content and interactive materials to complement in-person learning at universities, national schools, and higher institutes. Online courses are available for enrolled students who can access the university's website to engage with the digital educational resources.

Digitization of Higher Education Management

To support the digitization of higher education management and promote the use of digital tools in administration, the Ministry issued Ministerial Decision No. 50, 2018, establishing a committee to provide technical support for this process. The committee is responsible for assessing progress, promoting e-administration, and encouraging modernization initiatives within the sector.

CHALLENGES OF DIGITIZATION IN ALGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

The adoption of educational media and communication technologies in higher education in Algeria faces several key challenges, including:¹⁹

Problems with the operation of computers in university facilities.

- The absence of standardized specifications and criteria for devices used within a single university.
- The outdated computer systems and software in university libraries, due to the rapid pace of technological advancement.
- Weak infrastructure in many universities and their inability to support such technologies.
- Insufficient communication network infrastructure in many regions.
- The underdeveloped technology sector in developing countries, due to limited manufacturing capabilities and a

shortage of qualified technical expertise, or the emigration of such expertise.

Human Challenges

- Low cultural awareness of information technology both socially and organizationally within universities.
- A lack of training programs focused on advanced modern technologies within universities.
- Growing concerns among some managers and decision-makers that change threatens their authority.
- Limited incentives for employees to adopt digital practices.
- Insufficient knowledge of computer technologies and the fear some managers and employees have when using them.
- Lack of trust in the protection of confidential information and personal transactions in the digital environment.
- Resistance from employees to embrace technology, a lack of interest in using it, and reluctance driven by psychological and health concerns, as well as a general human tendency to resist change.

Financial Challenges

- Insufficient financial resources allocated to build the necessary infrastructure for implementing digital projects, particularly for establishing networks, connecting sites, and upgrading equipment.
- Limited financial resources available to university leadership due to fixed, constrained budgets.
- Insufficient funding for training and qualification programs necessary to implement digital projects.
- High costs of software and electronic devices.

OVERVIEW OF THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:

Article 22 of the joint ministerial decision dated August 24, 2004, which outlines the administrative organization of

universities, faculties, and institutes, defines a faculty as a unit for learning and research within the university, focused on the fields of science and knowledge. It is multidisciplinary and can be established when necessary, based on a dominant specialization.

The faculty originated from Decree No. 01-273, issued on September 18, 2001, which was later amended and supplemented. This decree led to the creation of the University of Guelma and its three faculties. Initially, these were known as the Faculty of Law, Literature, Languages, and Social Sciences. In 2010, these faculties were divided, resulting in the establishment of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is one of the largest of the seven faculties at the University of 08 May 1945 in Guelma, with a student population of 3,193. Among them, 2,572 are undergraduate students, 621 are postgraduate students, in addition to 11 doctoral students (LMD) and 18 doctoral students. These students are distributed across six departments: Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Media and Communication and Library Science, History, and Archaeology, along with branches of the common core for humanities studies.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Provision of a Digital Space by the University

Table 1. University Services

	Frequency	Percentage
Availability of information on the official university website	82	37%
Availability of information on official social media sites	89	40%
Availability of information	50	22%

on digital platforms		
Online lectures	2	1%
Total	223	100 %

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The table shows that the highest percentage of respondents (40%) preferred receiving information through official social media platforms. This was followed by 37% who relied on the university's official website, 22% who turned to digital platforms, and only 1% who preferred remote lectures. The preference for social media can be attributed to students' frequent use of these platforms, which facilitate continuous dissemination and interaction. Furthermore, social media provides quick and easy access to key university information, such as student-specific documents, grade reports, and registration details. In second place, the university's official website is favored for providing comprehensive control over the content, including official information, announcements, and updates. This ensures credibility and helps build trust with the students.

Figure 1: The University's Digital Space



Source: Prepared by the researchers

From the statistics presented in Figure 1, it is evident that most students (77.30%) reported that the university provides a digital space, while 22.70% disagreed. According to students' responses, the university provides a digital space for both entertainment and group study, such as the library and the computer science department. This space supports

communication and collaboration among students through online forums and group chats, fostering interaction, the exchange of ideas, and sharing of experiences.

• Public Relations Resources Used in the University:

Table 2: Public Relations Resources Used in the University

	Frequency	Percentage
Audio-Visual Public Relations Materials	54	24 %
Written Public Relations Materials	53	24%
Electronic Public Relations Materials	105	47 %
Visual Public Relations Materials	11	5 %
Total	223	100 %

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The table reveals that the university's primary public relations materials are electronic, accounting for 47%. Audiovisual and written public relations materials were selected at an equal rate of 24%, while visual materials were chosen at a lower rate of 5%. This suggests that the university predominantly uses electronic materials for public relations, as they allow easy access to all students via social media, email, and other digital platforms. Electronic materials save significant time and effort in communicating with students and disseminating information quickly and effectively. Furthermore, these materials enable direct interaction with students through comments, responses, and surveys, which strengthens communication. Additionally, the cost of communication through electronic media is generally lower than that of print distribution, resulting in financial savings for the university. The second most popular resources are audiovisual materials, which play a key role in enhancing effective communication between the university administration and students. For example, presentations and visual content can be used to clarify the

	Frequency	Percentage
During university entry	76	34 %
During crises	30	13 %
During meetings and conferences	53	24 %
During important events	61	27 %
At all times	3	1 %
Total	223	100 %

university's vision and goals while enhancing its public image. Furthermore, audio and visual materials can guide students and staff in understanding the university's core values and principles through videos and podcasts.

• **Times When Digital Public Relations Activities Are Practiced:**

Table 3: Times When Digital Public Relations Activities Are Practiced.

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The table shows that 34% of students selected university entry as the time when digital public relations activities are most frequently practiced, followed by 27% who chose important events, 24% who selected meetings and conferences, and just 1% stated that these activities are practiced at all times. From this, we can conclude that digital public relations activities are primarily carried out during university entry. This is due to the planning and organization of registration processes for both new and returning students, as well as the arrangement of academic programs and class schedules for the new academic year.

• **Challenges of Dealing with Digitization:**
Table 4: Challenges of Dealing with Digitization

	Frequency	Percentage
Material Challenges	36	16%
Technical Challenges	104	47%
Organizational Challenges	65	29%
Human Challenges	18	8%
Total	223	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The table reveals that the majority of students in the sample identified technical challenges as the main issue they face when dealing with digitization, accounting for 47%. These challenges primarily stem from internet connectivity problems, such as weak signals or service interruptions, which hinder students' ability to access digital resources. Additionally, completing online activities may require specific technical specifications, like an operating system or version, which some students struggle to meet, making it difficult to run or access the required programs and materials. There are also personal technical challenges, as students may face difficulties understanding how to use certain applications and digital tools, along with concerns regarding security and privacy when using technology. Meanwhile, 29% of students pointed to organizational challenges, particularly time management. Organizing time effectively becomes challenging when managing multiple digital resources, which can affect students' ability to complete assignments on time. Communication and collaboration with peers remotely also presents difficulties. The next set of challenges, selected by 16% of students, is financial. Many students find it difficult to afford the cost of tablets, computers, and the necessary software for online learning, and the need for a reliable internet connection adds an additional financial burden. Finally, 8% of students mentioned human challenges, highlighting the lack of interaction, focus, and attention when engaging with peers.

• **Challenges Faced by Students When Using the Moodle Platform:**

Table 5: Challenges Faced by Students When Using the Moodle Platform

	Frequency	Percentage
Difficulty obtaining an account	41	18%
Difficulty downloading lectures	17	8%
Difficulty communicating with professors	40	18%
Difficulty accessing links	54	24%
Losing password	28	13%
Difficulty logging into the platform	40	18%
Difficulty relying on it as a teaching tool	1	0%
Difficulty communicating with students	1	0%
Weak internet connection	1	0%
Total	223	%100

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The data from the table shows that the main challenges students face when using the Moodle platform, according to the respondents, are related to difficulty accessing links, with 24% of students reporting this issue. This is followed by problems with obtaining an account, logging into the platform, and difficulty communicating with professors, each accounting for 18%. Next, 13% of students reported losing their passwords, followed by 8% who faced difficulties downloading lectures. Finally, 0% of respondents reported challenges with adopting the platform as a teaching tool, communicating with students, or experiencing weak internet connections. From this, we conclude that most students face issues with accessing links, which can

be attributed to weak internet connections or a lack of experience with digital platforms. Students also struggle with using modern technologies like Moodle, often preferring traditional methods they find more effective. Additionally, some training courses are perceived as complicated and unclear, leading students to avoid them in favor of learning through experience. This was confirmed by the respondents during the interviews, who mentioned that students are not aware of the importance of these training courses, and as a result, they tend to ignore them. Furthermore, there are other challenges in using Moodle, such as encountering broken links that prevent students from accessing the platform's content.

• **Challenges Faced by Students When Using the Progress Platform:**

Table 6: Challenges Faced by Students When Using the Progress Platform

	Frequency	Percentage
Difficulty obtaining an account	43	19%
Difficulty registering	47	21%
Weak internet connection	108	48%
Weak French language skills	17	8%
Points not entered on time, and incorrect results	1	0%
Nothing is entered	1	0%
Forgotten password	1	0%
Weak platform	1	0%
No difficulty	3	1%
Frequent errors on the platform	1	0%
Total	223	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The table above shows that most students in the sample identified internet connection issues as the primary challenge they face when using the Progress platform, with 48% reporting this difficulty. This is followed by difficulties with registration (21%), challenges in obtaining an account (19%), and weak French language skills (8%). A small percentage (1%) of students indicated that they do not experience any difficulties with the platform. Additionally, there were some random responses (also 1%) mentioning problems such as delayed grading, incorrect results, lost passwords, weak platform performance, and frequent malfunctions. The majority of students find it difficult to use the platform due to weak internet connectivity, often experiencing temporary interruptions that prevent access to the platform. Moreover, when the internet network becomes congested due to multiple

users accessing it simultaneously, the connection speed decreases, which negatively affects the use of the Progress platform.

9. STUDY RESULTS:

- The study demonstrated that the majority of students primarily rely on official social media platforms for accessing the university's online services, as they consider these platforms to be the most suitable option for all students.

- It was revealed that most students confirmed that the university provides a digital space that facilitates student life and enhances their online learning experience.

- The study confirmed that the university provides modern devices and equipment that facilitate the digitization process, helping students and researchers effectively complete their academic tasks.

- The study showed that the college has provided a comprehensive guide on using the Moodle platform and organized training sessions for students and faculty to teach them how to use the platform effectively.

- Our study also concluded that most students prefer distance learning through the Google Meet app, as they find it user-friendly and it offers opportunities to participate in discussions and send instant messages, enhancing their interaction and understanding of study materials.

- The study found that most students prefer accessing scientific resources digitally, such as downloading lectures, enabling them to quickly obtain materials and save time and effort.

- Our study revealed that most students use the Progress platform to check their grades, ensuring the confidentiality of the grading process, saving time and effort, and maintaining their academic privacy.

- The study confirmed that most students are unaware of the absence of a dedicated public relations office, as there is a media and communication unit

responsible for handling public relations functions.

- It became clear that department management handles public relations by providing insights into the needs and expectations of both students and faculty, contributing to building a positive image of the university and enhancing its interactions.

- The study confirmed that digital public relations are most active during university entry, especially for new students who require essential information about guidance, registration processes, and organizing their study schedules.

- The use of digital materials by the university enhances learning and communication between students and professors, facilitating access to scientific resources.

- Students face financial challenges, such as acquiring necessary devices and paying for internet connectivity.

- The study confirmed that the primary challenge students face when using the Progress platform is slow internet connectivity, including service interruptions or frequent disconnections, which affect the overall quality of the connection.

10. CONCLUSION

We are living in an era of rapid technological advancements that have influenced a wide range of fields and sectors. In this research, we focused on digitization in university institutions, particularly in the realm of public relations, due to its critical role in improving the effectiveness of university operations. It is essential to embrace modern trends in order to raise social awareness, modernize operations, and replace traditional methods within university departments, especially in public relations. This shift has led to the emergence of digital public relations, offering practitioners new techniques and tools. Given its importance as a communication technology relied upon by universities to engage with students, faculty,

and external stakeholders, and to identify their needs and desires, the use of digitization in this sector represents a revolutionary shift in educational methods and technologies. Algerian universities, including the University of Guelma as a case study, have supported this new educational approach through digital platforms such as Moodle. These platforms are crucial in enhancing communication, facilitating information exchange, and promoting dialogue between students and faculty, with the Progress platform also playing a significant role.

Digitization is not just about technology; it involves a cultural, process-oriented, and behavioral shift. Therefore, universities must develop comprehensive digital strategies that include continuous staff training, along with fostering innovation and experimentation in line with the needs of the digital age. As is evident today, keeping up with new technologies is vital for digital public relations, as digital tools can be applied at every stage of the public relations process, benefiting a wide range of activities. Digital public relations are now considered an art form, requiring extensive studies, technological expertise, and continuous practice. Such expertise can only be developed through sustained engagement and staying current with new developments, positioning digital public relations as a key strategy for engaging the university's internal audience. However, challenges such as insufficient technological resources and other obstacles remain barriers to fully realizing digitization.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

At the end of this study, we offer the following proposals and recommendations:

- Allocate sufficient resources to invest in modern technological infrastructure and digital systems that support learning, training, and university administration.
- Establish a dedicated public relations office.
- Facilitate digital communication between students and faculty.

- Encourage students to engage with the content and activities on the Moodle and Progress platforms through discussions, comments, and evaluations.
- Provide accessible technical support services to assist students in resolving technical issues or inquiries related to digital platforms.
- Increase financial support to provide all the necessary tools and technologies for implementing digitization in higher education.
- Focus more on improving the quality of digital platforms and intensify efforts in the digital technology sector.
- Organize open workshops to raise awareness about digital transformations and encourage others to embrace them.
- Increase training sessions for students and staff to raise awareness of digital technologies and ensure their effective use.
- Pay attention to data protection and privacy when using digital technologies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Promote efforts to enhance and develop digital technologies to meet the future needs of higher education.
- Support students and staff in developing their digital ideas and turning them into successful entrepreneurial projects.
- Update the curricula in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and incorporate modern technologies into teaching materials to provide a comprehensive and sustainable learning experience for both the present and the future.
- Learn from the experiences of leading countries in this field by collaborating with advanced foreign universities.

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