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**The Effectiveness of Public Relations in Social Service Institutions: A Field Study
at the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province (Algeria).**

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Abstract :

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of public relations in social service institutions, specifically focusing on the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province, Algeria. The researcher sought to understand the effectiveness of using communication methods as a modern administrative approach in social service institutions. The study population consisted of all employees in the hospital's public relations department, with a sample size of 30 employees selected through comprehensive sampling. The researcher utilized a questionnaire and employed statistical methods for data analysis.

The study reached several conclusions:

1. The Public Relations Department at the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province employs various communication methods and techniques, ranging from audio-visual tools to printed and direct communication methods.
2. The most commonly used communication tool by the Public Relations Department is the telephone.
3. The Public Relations Department faces several challenges, primarily the shortage of specialists in public relations.
4. The activities of the Public Relations Department at the hospital are considered moderate, according to the study sample's opinions.

Keywords: ;Effectiveness of Public Relations; Social Institutions; Service Institutions

Introduction

Public relations have always been a central element in every society and in every public or private institution. Historically, individuals and organizations have attempted to solve their problems through trial and error, sometimes succeeding and other times failing. However, as these relationships grew increasingly complex in modern societies, the need for a scientific and objective study of public relations became apparent. This led to the emergence of public relations as a relatively new field of study. Interest in public relations began and developed in its modern sense within Western societies, initially in the context of business and industry, and later expanding to all other types of institutions, including social and religious organizations. These institutions came to realize that they could not succeed if they remained isolated from the public or distanced themselves from it. Thus, the importance of public relations became evident in strengthening relationships and establishing a close connection between institutions and their audiences.

In Arab countries and most developing nations, public relations have not received the necessary attention in terms of research and study, despite their significant importance to organizations and the crucial role they play. This lack of attention is often due to the confusion between public relations and other activities such as advertising and propaganda.

Algeria, like other third-world countries, practices public relations within its various institutions as a form of human service, but often not through modern scientific methods. Therefore, this analytical and practical study of public relations in social service institutions is conducted to assess the current state of public relations with the aim of finding the most effective and efficient ways to implement and practice them. This study is founded on the belief in the importance of public relations, given their substantial role in the success and sustainability of institutions.

First: Methodological Procedures of the Study

1. The Problem Statement:

Public relations have evolved into a sophisticated art of human communication and a powerful tool for establishing modern, civilized relationships between institutions and their audiences. When examining the nature of these institutions and organizations, it is evident that they primarily provide services aimed at satisfying their audiences, generally encompassing all individuals who interact with them. The success of these relationships often reflects the effectiveness of the public relations efforts within these institutions. However, a paradox arises in the frequent undervaluation of the role and importance of public relations, leading to a lack of the recognition and attention it deserves.

Despite the significant importance of public relations and its essential role, along with its widespread presence across various fields, there remains a persistent misunderstanding of its true nature. This has led to its marginalization and a reduction in its strategic importance within institutions. Public relations have thus been confined to a narrow scope of marginal roles, such as organizing receptions and coordinating minor activities. As a result, public relations often occupy an

administrative position that does not align with its importance and role within the institution. In many cases, it is subordinated to any position within the organizational structure, which does not reflect its true value. There is a clear need to reconsider the importance of this function and to grant it a distinguished position within management.

The problem lies in the widespread misunderstanding of the true nature of public relations, which limits its effectiveness in serving humanity and fostering understanding and acceptance among people. The term "public relations" itself has become associated with incorrect meanings in the minds of many. People often confuse public relations with the activities of advertising agencies or event planners. Some even believe that public relations is merely a subset of media relations. Consequently, public relations is often viewed as a purely executive function. However, in reality, public relations should be recognized as a significant, independent specialization and a consultative reference with its distinct entity.

This study will focus on public relations in the social sphere, considering it as a social phenomenon within various social institutions, whether their goals are productive or service-oriented. Specifically, the study will examine public relations in government social service institutions, treating it as a social service that must be provided.

All these factors have driven us to explore the topic of public relations within social institutions, emphasizing its role as a social service. This will be done by examining the current practice of public relations at the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province, as it is a government social service institution. This leads to the central research question:

- **How effective is the practice of public relations as a social service at the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province, considering it as a social institution?**

This main question gives rise to several sub-questions:

- **Do the communication tools used in public relations contribute to the effectiveness of its functions?**
- **What are the obstacles faced by public relations within the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province?**

2. Study Hypotheses:

- **There is a role for communication tools in the effectiveness of public relations within the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province.**
- **There are obstacles within the Public Relations Department at the Friendship Eye Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa Province.**

3. Definition of Concepts:

A. Definition of Effectiveness:

Despite the importance of effectiveness in the life of organizations, there is no consensus on a single definition. Some believe that organizational effectiveness is determined by the organization's ability to achieve its goals. One definition of effectiveness is: "The ability of an organization to achieve its goals, with this

ability and the criteria used to measure it depending on the model used in studying organizations" (Saleh, 2006, p. 84).

Another definition states: "The ability of an organization to achieve long-term and short-term goals, which reflect the balance of power of influential entities and the interests of stakeholders involved in the evaluation, as well as the stage of growth or development the organization is undergoing" (Mohammed, 2000, p. 104).

B. Definition of Public Relations:

The concept of public relations has evolved rapidly over the years, as evidenced by the numerous and varied definitions. However, this does not preclude the presentation of some of the definitions found in academic books and studies.

Linguistic Definition: The concept represented by the term "public relations" is more meaningful and purposeful when we precisely understand the meaning of the two words: "relations" and "public." The word "relations" refers to the connections and links between management and the public, while "public" refers to the general populace or the masses interacting with the management and institution (Abdelaziz, 2000, p. 203).

Terminological Definition: Public relations are "a set of efforts made by an organization to ensure mutual trust and understanding between its requirements and the audience it deals with in various forms, involving both administrative and communication activities" (Abdelaziz, 2000, p. 203).

Another definition of public relations describes it as: "An administrative and communication activity used by public relations professionals to build the organization's reputation and help it succeed through constructive and preventive programs, and to correct any negative situations affecting this reputation through corrective programs, employing processes such as research, planning, implementation, and follow-up, while adhering to values of beauty and ethics" (Ali, 2007, p. 12).

Operational Definition:

Public relations are a set of policies and various activities aimed at establishing continuous understanding between the organization and its audience.

The Concept of Social Service Institutions:

Linguistic Definition: The term "institution" derives from the verb "to establish," meaning "to create" or "to found." For example, to "establish a house" means to lay its foundation, and to "establish a project" means to initiate or create it (Ali, 2007, p. 14).

Terminological Definition: There are several definitions of social service institutions, including:

- **Talcott Parsons' Definition:** Social institutions are "social units or human groups that are constructed and reconstructed to achieve specific goals" (Hana, 1997, p. 156).
- **Talaat Ibrahim's Definition:** "The term 'social institution' refers to any body, group, or organization, whether social, governmental, or non-governmental, that consolidates efforts to provide social services in a specific field or multiple social fields. The institution delivers these services through organized, cooperative groups, as an individual's effort is

minimal compared to the collective efforts of organized bodies or groups" (Lotfi, p. 39).

Service Institution: "A service institution is a productive organization that employs a large number of workers under one roof or several roofs with a service-oriented nature. It is composed of a group of individuals who share a common goal, aiming to achieve a project through various service operations, with the ultimate goal of sharing in profits" (Hammoudi, p. 23).

Operational Definition: Social units affiliated with the state that are intentionally constructed and are specialized in providing services in one or more fields, either directly or indirectly. These institutions have a basic system and regulations that define their objectives and operational framework. In this study, the institution is considered the primary entity in the communication process.

Second: The Field Methodological Procedures of the Study:

1. Methodology:

Before discussing the methodology used in this study, it is important to note that each research method has its specific conditions, requirements, and limitations in research and investigation. These factors dictate that the researcher employs a particular method in certain situations. The process of selecting a research method is not arbitrary; rather, the nature and type of the subject under investigation compel the researcher to prefer one method over another.

Given that we aim to understand the effectiveness of public relations in the ophthalmology hospital in Algeria and to shed light on the importance that management places on this activity, the nature of this study necessitates the use of the **social survey method**. This method is appropriate as it aids in the in-depth investigation of the factors and various relationships that contribute to a social unit, whether it be an individual, a group, or another institution. It also assists in a deeper understanding of the interacting situations and factors (Mohammed, 1983, p. 133).

Additionally, we employed the **descriptive-analytical approach**, which allows us to gather as much descriptive information as possible and utilize and interpret the data to understand the current reality. The descriptive approach describes the existing conditions and relationships, focusing on identifying common practices within groups by collecting information and data. The descriptive method is often used in studying human-related topics and is particularly prevalent in media research (Abdel Raouf, 1994, p. 205).

2. The Questionnaire:

The construction and formulation of the questionnaire questions are based on the study hypotheses, in addition to some models from previous studies that guide how to phrase the questionnaire questions. A questionnaire is defined as "a model that contains a set of questions directed to individuals to obtain information about a subject, problem, or situation. The questionnaire is administered either through personal interviews or sent to the respondents" (Zrouati, 2002, p. 23).

3. Sample and Sampling:

The method used for data collection depends on the research objectives and the size of the study population. There are two main methods for data collection:

1. Census Method

2. Sampling Method

In this research, we adopted the **census method**.

Census Method: "This method involves the researcher studying all the elements or units of the population under investigation without exception" (Salah, 2022, p. 432).

In various fields, including social sciences, a researcher cannot conduct a study without a thorough understanding of the research population. The census method is applied when the population is limited in size, allowing the researcher to include all units in the study according to the defined objectives. Given our ability to control the units of our research population, we chose the census method.

Third: Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data:

1. Presentation and Analysis of Personal Data:

Table 01: Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	13	43.34%
Female	17	76.47%
Total	30	100%

It is evident that the percentage of female respondents is higher than that of males, with the former constituting 76.47% and the latter 43.34% of the total sample. This difference can be attributed to the diversity of staff employed at the hospital and the Public Relations department's preference for hiring females, as they are considered more suitable for roles in public relations, such as reception and guidance.

Table 02: Distribution by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-29 years	13	43.33%
30-39 years	12	40.00%
40 years and above	05	16.66%
Total	30	100%

It is clearly observed that the age group of 20-29 years represents the highest percentage of the sample, accounting for 43.33%, followed by the age group of 30-39 years at 40.00%. The age group of 40 years and above constitutes 16.66% of the sample.

By calculating the mean age of the above groups, we find that the average age of the sample is approximately 29 years, assuming the maximum age of the last group is 60 years. This indicates that the sample is relatively young. These percentages can be primarily attributed to the demographic structure of Algeria, which is characterized by a broad base and a narrow peak, reflecting a high percentage of young people.

Table 03: Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	00	00%
Primary	00	00%
Middle School	02	6.66%
High School	10	33.34%
University	18	60.00%
Total	30	100%

There is noticeable diversity in the educational levels of the employees, as well as a variation in their proportions. The highest percentage is observed among those with a university-level education, constituting 60.00%, followed by those with a high school education at 33.34%.

The key takeaway from this data is that the Friendship Hospital, like other administrative institutions in Algeria, relies heavily on employees with a university-level education.

Table 04: Distribution of the Sample by Work Experience (Seniority)

Seniority	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-1 year	05	16.66%
1-2 years	12	40.00%
2 years or more	13	43.33%
Total	30	100%

The above table shows that the selected sample includes various periods of seniority, with work experience among the employees divided into three main categories. The highest percentage, 43.33%, is represented by those with 2 years or more of experience, followed by the 1-2 years category.

This distribution can be attributed to the fact that most employees belong to a middle age group (as indicated in the previous table), meaning that the majority of them have a relatively moderate amount of work experience.

2. Presentation and Analysis of Data Related to the Hypotheses

First: Presentation and Analysis of Data for the First Hypothesis

Table 05: Use of Communication Tools by the Public Relations Department

Use of Communication Tools by the Public Relations Department	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100%
No	00	00%
Don't Know	00	00%
Total	30	100%

The statistical evidence shows that all participants in the study are aware of the Public Relations department's use of various communication tools at the hospital.

This indicates that the employees are in constant and regular contact with this department, as evidenced by the 100% agreement among the sample.

Table 06: Ranking of Communication Tools by Frequency of Use

Options	Rank	Frequency	Weight	Adjusted Frequency	Total	Final Rank
Notice Board	1	12	5	60	124	2
	2	10	4	40		
	3	08	3	24		
	4	00	2	00		
	5	00	1	00		
Brochures	1	01	5	05	76	4
	2	04	4	16		
	3	07	3	21		
	4	16	2	32		
	5	02	1	02		
Telephone	1	14	5	70	129	1
	2	12	4	48		
	3	03	3	09		
	4	01	2	02		
	5	00	1	00		
Internet	1	00	5	00	40	5
	2	00	4	00		
	3	03	3	09		
	4	02	2	06		
	5	25	1	25		
Meetings	1	03	5	15	83	3
	2	04	4	16		
	3	09	3	27		
	4	11	2	22		
	5	03	1	03		

The data above indicates that the telephone is ranked first in terms of usage frequency, followed by the notice board in second place, meetings in third place, and the internet in fourth place.

The study sample's preference for using the telephone is likely due to its constant availability and ease of use. However, this does not diminish the importance of the other communication tools, which are also considered and integrated into the execution of public relations activities at the hospital.

Table 07: Distribution by Communication Tools

Communication Tool	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Notice Board	10	33.33%
Brochures	00	00%
Telephone	14	46.66%
Internet	04	13.33%
Meetings	02	6.66%
Total	30	100%

The table shows that 46.66% of the study participants prefer using the telephone, while 33.33% of the sample prefers the notice board. Following this, 13.33% of the sample prefers the internet, and a small percentage of 6.66% prefers meetings. This variation in communication tool preference can be primarily attributed to the individual personality of the employee, as well as the nature of the tasks assigned and how well they align with the chosen tool. Additionally, this variation reflects the actual use of the tools and the advantages they offer compared to others. However, it is important to note that despite these differences, the employees collectively agree on the preference for the telephone, as evidenced by its widespread use in the hospital.

Table 08: Distribution by Basis for Preferring Communication Tools

Basis for Preferring Communication Tools	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cost	13	22.41%
Widespread Use	15	25.86%
Ease of Use	22	37.93%
Lack of Alternatives	08	13.79%
Other	00	00%
Total	58	100%

This table was calculated based on the expressed frequencies rather than the total sample size. The data reveals that the primary basis for preferring a communication tool is ease of use, which ranked first with 37.93%. Widespread use was the basis for 25.86% of the choices, while cost accounted for 22.41% of the preferences. Finally, 13.79% of the choices were based on the lack of available alternatives.

These data reflect how employees prioritize communication tools, choosing those they believe are most suitable for their use. This preference is influenced by both their perceptions of the existing tools and their desires for the tools they wish to use in the future.

Table 09: Distribution by Evaluation of Communication Tools Used

Evaluation of Communication Tools Used	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Suitable	09	30.00%

Evaluation of Communication Tools Used	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Somewhat Suitable	20	66.66%
Not Suitable	01	03.33%
Total	30	100%

From this table, we observe that 66.66% of the study sample believes that the communication tools used by the Public Relations Department are somewhat suitable. This is followed by 30.00% of the participants who find the tools suitable, while a small percentage of 3.33% considers the communication tools used by the department to be unsuitable.

This indicates that the communication tools employed by the Public Relations Department generally accommodate most employees and are appropriate for internal audience programs and the tasks assigned to them. It also shows the extent to which the internal audience relies on these tools to implement various programs, whether related to public relations or other activities.

Results in Light of the First Hypothesis:

After collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data, the field study concluded with the following findings:

1. The Public Relations Department at the Friendship Ophthalmology Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa utilizes a variety of communication tools and techniques, ranging from auditory media to printed and direct communication methods.
2. The most frequently used communication tool by the Public Relations Department is the telephone.
3. The communication tools used by the Public Relations Department are generally deemed appropriate for the institution's activities as a whole and specifically for the Public Relations Department.

Based on these findings, the study's hypothesis is confirmed: the Public Relations Department at the Friendship Ophthalmology Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) in Djelfa employs multiple communication tools.

Second: Presentation and Analysis of Data for the Second Hypothesis

Table 10: Does the Public Relations Department Perform Its Activities Effectively?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	02	06.66%
No	01	03.33%
Somewhat	27	90.00%
Total	30	100%

The table shows that the majority of the study participants believe that the Public Relations Department performs its activities to some extent, with 90.00% indicating "somewhat" and 6.66% indicating "yes." Only 3.33% of the respondents believe that the department does not perform its activities effectively.

This suggests a relative shortfall in the execution of activities related to the Public Relations Department within the hospital. Despite the generally positive view of the current activities, there is an acknowledgment that these activities fall short of the desired level of effectiveness as expected from the department.

Table 11: Nature of Obstacles Faced by the Public Relations Department

Obstacle	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Administrative Reasons	04	13.33%
Lack of Specialists	26	39.39%
Other Reasons	00	00.00%
Total	30	100%

The data above indicates that the primary obstacle to the activities of the Public Relations Department is the lack of specialists, with 39.39% of the sample citing this as the main issue. Administrative reasons are cited by 13.33% of the respondents as the primary obstacle.

This suggests that the absence of specialists significantly hinders the public relations activities within the hospital, which can negatively impact the external perception of the department.

Table 12: Main Obstacle to Public Relations Activities

Obstacle	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Technical Reasons	03	10.00%
Financial Reasons	09	30.00%
Functional Reasons	03	10.00%
Lack of Specialists	15	50.00%
No Independent Department	00	00.00%
Total	30	100%

The table shows that the main obstacle to public relations activities is the lack of specialists, as indicated by 50.00% of the study sample. The second most significant obstacle is financial reasons, cited by 30.00% of the respondents. Technical and functional reasons each accounted for 10.00% of the responses.

The high percentage of responses indicating a lack of specialists reflects several factors, including insufficient attention given to the department and a lack of necessary resources to carry out its activities. Although financial reasons also play a role, they do not diminish the critical impact of the shortage of specialists on the department's performance.

Table 13: Opinions of Sample Members on the Activities of the Public Relations Department

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good	05	16.66%
Average	22	73.33%
Poor	03	10.00%

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total	30	100%

The table indicates that the majority of the sample, 73.33%, view the activities of the Public Relations Department as average. Meanwhile, 16.66% consider the activities to be good, and 10.00% describe them as poor.

This suggests that while the department's activities are generally perceived as average, there are notable areas for improvement. The perception of average performance is largely attributed to various factors, including the lack of specialists in the field, which affects the department's ability to perform its activities optimally.

Results in Light of the Second Hypothesis:

1. The Public Relations Department faces several difficulties and obstacles, with the primary issue being the lack of specialists in the field of public relations.
2. The activities of the Public Relations Department are considered average according to the study sample.

Based on the results, the hypothesis can be confirmed with the following points:

- The Public Relations Department at the Friendship Ophthalmology Hospital (Cuba/Algeria) suffers from several obstacles, with the most significant being the shortage of specialists.

Conclusion:

Every department within social service institutions has specific goals it aims to achieve, and the objectives of the Public Relations Department are reflected in its role within the administrative framework. This department primarily focuses on internal communications, establishing mutual understanding between the organization and its internal audience, building a positive reputation within the workplace, and maintaining ongoing communication.

To achieve these goals, the Public Relations Department employs honest media practices and other methods such as meetings, gatherings, newsletters, and participation in various events. The department's tasks should concentrate on the internal audience by preparing weekly or monthly reports about the organization's role and achievements, while also addressing the external audience to build trust through accurate and objective information.

This study reflects the effectiveness of public relations at one of the key social service institutions, Friendship Hospital for Ophthalmology, Koba/Algeria, in the Wilaya of Djelfa. Since its establishment, efforts have been made to enhance the Public Relations Department's performance to achieve effective and impactful activities. However, it is evident that these efforts are still evolving and improving at various levels.

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