

IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES ON ROLE AND WORK DUTIES OF UNIVERSITY PUBLIC RELATION OFFICERS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Idea to conduct this study is to check the impact of demographic factor of Public Relations Officers (PRO) and knowledge management capabilities on technical, managerial, and professional responsibilities of PROs. This study is exclusively studying the role and responsibilities of PROs in public universities of Pakistan. To achieve the objective of this study, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be preferred and statistical approaches to address research questions about relationships among covert and observed variables. While examining the space between study and higher educational institutes' PR practices, presently, the literature suggests some varied conclusions, nevertheless, the study has been developed to streamline the higher education institutes' PR, however, the practicalities of PR in the universities are yet to be developed. Research suggests that PROs who perform on both intellectual and managerial positions, management involve them during organizational decision-making and those PROs reach to the eminence and are respected among superiors.

Keywords: university, public relations, technology, structure, culture, acquisition, conversion, application, security, strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator, problem solver, issues management expert, communication coordinator

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Background

Public sector universities appoint PROs to carry out official communiqué bustles. Public relations' situation in higher educational institutes' is persistently complex. Duties & consequent professional responsibilities of PROs and their possible contribution towards the interests of many universities are centrally misunderstood (E.J. Anctil, 2003; Bagwell, 1997; Brigman & Hanson, 2000; Carr, 2009; Cavill, 2006; Cooper, 2007; Dhillion, 2001; Hale, 2001; Kummerfeld, 1975; Lewison & Hawes, 2007; J. Ross & C. Halstead, 2001; Sickler, 2005; Stover, 2005; Warner, 1996).

As said by (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006), this is wisely supposed, heads of universities have to be completely aware of the professional duties of their PROs, and the PROs also should realize their responsibilities & professional procedures to attain the institution's organizational goals. Bearing in mind, over four thousand universities have PROs, carrying out public relations activities however; the narrative advises that neither higher management nor PROs are completely aware of their professional responsibilities.

Studies have been conducted over the past two decades to deal with this misunderstanding. In public relations, the study finds two full and clear responsibilities and their relevant duties constantly; the coordinator, who carries out planned communication activities technically, the manager, planner of administratively tactical communication conducts (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Leuven, 2007). The function of coordinator understood by PROs includes strategic responsibilities such as lettering, controlling (media materials), photographing, managing communicative fabrication, organizing particular activities and media management (Lattimore et al., 2007).

Performing as planner, PROs who contribute to achieve organizational objectives, generally management do not involve them in institution's tactical administrative meetings because administration do not consider PROs as the part of senior-level administration (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Cutlip et al., 2006; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995).

Conversely, PROs as a managers are logically part of organizational administration, they use their competencies in the direction of gauging results/impacts of PR tasks. They centrally focus on responsibilities such as assessing the situations, structuring alliance, supervising institutional concerns along with helping with an advice to the top management for institutional policy-making (Cutlip et al., 2006). Research suggests that PROs, who perform on both the intellectual and the managerial positions, management involve them during organizational decision-making and those PROs reach to the eminence and are respected among superiors (Cutlip et al., 2006).

Literature Review

This study examines the function as well as significance of PR in higher educational institutes. Empirical studies' review suggests, institutes' higher management's misconstruction of the roles of university PROs' has been one of the dilemmas that emerged in PR practices. From the narrative of the research, majority of PROs surveyed, considered that the higher management strongly misunderstood their professional responsibilities as well as their possible input to attain the institution's objectives (Peyronel, 1998; J. E. Ross & C. P. Halstead, 2001c; Vithakamontri,

1991). Additionally, the empirical study also revealed that university PR practitioners are also unaware of their complete professional obligations (Dozier & Broom,1995; Hale, 2001; Phair & King, 2001).

Amid the surfacing of university promotion & publicity trends and stratagem, the possible ambiguity and role conflict arises(Hale,2001). While reviewing pragmatic literature a disagreement from PR specialists also comes into the light that, if PROs do not carry out their job technically as well as intellectually they cannot be supposed to get a “seat at the table”. If PROs execute the managerial role in a professionally practical way; the top management may understand the value of PROs in making organizational decisions (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier,2002).Due to some certain reasons the professional PR practices in the universities were under-evaluated most of the time (E.J. Anctil, 2003; Bagwell, 1997; Brigman& Hanson, 2000; Carr, 2009; Cavill, 2006; Cooper, 2007; Dhillion, 2001; Hale, 2001; Kummerfeldt, 1975; Lewison& Hawes, 2007; J. Ross & C. Halstead, 2001; Sickler, 2005; Stover, 2005; Warner, 1996).

Several studies were conducted on the basis of this literature to conclude if the PR study and its application are really joined in university public relations practices. Peyronel and Turk, by their classical research in the literature, persistently identified stern spaces; generally, it is a reality that alongside the university management most of PROs work as secondment manager positions but with no adequate involvement in top administrative casting lots. Despite the fact that a pessimistic one of dissatisfaction and contrary conclusion has been set up in the study of PR at higher educational institutes. Discouraging conclusions of Peyronel’s study are still weighty on the literary study of public relations. Keeping the institute’s strategical objectives and their respective outcomes in the minds, the debates have set in motion to propose the rationalized approach of higher education institutes’ PROs towards achieving the higher education institutes’ defined goals (Allston, 2001; Bagwell, 1997; Brunner, 2005; Krotseng & Zaccai, 2001; Lowrie& H, 2006; Morley &Aynsley, 2007; Peyronel, 2001; Peyronel, 1998; Rindfliesh, 2003; Turk, 2000; Woodrow, 2004; Yi, 2005). While examining the space between study and higher educational institutes’ PR practices, presently, the literature suggests some varied conclusions, nevertheless, the study has been developed to streamline the higher education institutes’ PR, and however, the practicalities of PR in the universities are yet to be developed.

A quantity of theoretical private and public sector public relations models emerged from the literature review for supporting the expertness in PR; defining and explaining PROs different professional responsibilities wherein they should participate proactively. This study not only surfaced the five-factor model to define the responsibilities and goals of PROs, moreover, it differentiates the technical and intellectual spheres of PR. This model is focusing on the technical as well as administrative aspects of the public relation practices (Allston, 2001; Echague, 2003; Eder, 2007; Fassett& J.T., 2004; Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Kozolanka, 2006; Minch, 2005).

The theory and its diversified practices have surfaced the misunderstood tactical and managerial responsibilities of university PROs. Their actual professional responsibility is to set communicative and pragmatic approach to foster and maintain the university’s objectives. A significant drawback from the study has surfaced a finding that the above mentioned model has not been engaged in any study so far (DeSanto et al., 2007; Moss et al., 2005) this model possibly will define and explain professional responsibilities of PROs at universities to a large extent.

Purpose of the Study

Idea to conduct this study is to check the impact of demographic factor of PRO and knowledge management capabilities on technical and managerial professional responsibilities of PROs from

Punjab (Pakistan). This five-factor model will be used to determine the responsibilities and goals of PROs in the exclusive populace of PROs, working in public universities of the Punjab. Moreover, this practice will examine the level of their administrative and coordinative responsibilities as PROs. This study will also be examining to the parallel magnitude of their responsibilities, their access to top management and kind of university where PROs work. This practice will also realize the professional working relationship of PROs with their top tier management of the universities.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do infrastructural knowledge management capabilities affect the role and work duties of PROs?

RQ2: Do process based knowledge management capabilities affect the role and work duties of PROs?

RQ3: Do age, gender, qualification and job experience of PROs affect the role and work duties of PROs?

RQ4: Taking the model into consideration, how much practically do universities PROs presume the responsibility of faultless communiqué coordinators?

Research Methods

Participants

Public relation officers (PRO) are the target population of public universities of Pakistan. The current study will utilize the adopted questionnaires and follow the quantitative approach to examine the relationship of demographic factors and knowledge management capability and its impact on role and work duties of PRO's. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed by using simple random probability sampling technique. Moreover, the present study will employ the following data analysis techniques to achieve its objectives.

Data Analysis

To achieve the objective of this study, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be preferred and statistical approaches to address research questions about relationships among covert and observed variables (DeCoster, 1998; Roberts, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006). CFA is a confirmatory mode of data analysis that is a theory-testing procedure versus an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) which is a theory-generating procedure (Roberts, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006).

Discussion

In the direction of finding the impact of knowledge management capabilities (Infrastructural & Process) on the role and work duties of PROs, a descriptive statistics and Pearson moment correlation is applied while Cronbach's alpha is also being mentioned regarding each question

and results are shown in table 7.1. To verify the association between the variables, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and descriptive statistics were determined and analyzed to compute mean and standard deviation of the variables. 5 point Likert scale was used to get the answers whereas Cronbach's alpha was also computed to test the reliability of each variable as shown in table 7.1.

This study has employed twelve variables technology, structure, culture, acquisition, conversion, application, security, strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator, problem solver, issues management expert and communication coordinator to measure knowledge management capabilities (Infrastructural & Process) and their impacts on the role and work duties of PROs. The table 7.1 shows mean values of the effective responses that represent target population's leaning and standard deviation of each variable represents overall difference of each respondent against each variable. Cronbach's alpha was also performed to determine the reliability of analysis. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient "r" communicates the relationship between variables shown in table 7.1. Each variable expresses strong and significant positive correlation with the role and work duties of PROs excluding yellow shaded variables in table 7.1 that represent negative strong correlation between the concerned variables. The analysis shown in table 7.1 where the variable technology is significantly stoutly negatively correlated at value $r = -.137$ with issues management expert and lowly insignificantly negatively correlate with culture at value of $-.065$ and highly significantly correlate with structure at value of $.255$ at 0.01 significance level. It also strongly positively correlates with acquisition, conversion, application, security, strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator and problem solver at the value of $.555$, $.144$, $.333$, $.462$, $.221$, $.328$ and $.497$ respectively and insignificant with coordinator while 3.9 mean value shows just about more than average response of respondents which symbolizes the tendency towards the satisfactory response about employing the technology and total variation among respondents is $.52$.

The mean value of structure is 4.1 which shows public relation officers' satisfactory bent towards structure in technology and deviation between responses is $.63$ and reliability of this variable is 74 % whereas highly significant correlation between structure and technology is $.255$ and also strongly correlated at $.320$ with problem solver. The mean value of culture is 3.2 which is near to 3 that shows PROs' neutral response and variation among responses is $.54$ and reliability of this variable is 78 % while correlation between culture and technology is $-.065$ which shows the insignificant negative response and also strongly correlated at $.157$ & $.105$ as shown in table with acquisition and communication coordinator respectively. The 4.1 mean value of Acquisition shows that more or less PROs are aware of their role and responsibilities of the job, Acquisition of technology at strongly positive significant value of $.555$ shows that it contributes to the problem solver at the value of $.663$, strategy adviser at $.531$ and at $.105$ strongly significant positive value of communication coordinator with the standard deviation among responses is $.62$ and reliability of 69%. The mean value of conversion is 3.8 which is near to 4 that shows PROs convenience from conversion from technology and variation among responses is $.36$ and reliability of this variable is 71% while correlation between conversion and strategy advisor is $.525$ highly positively significant, strongly correlated at $.488$ with problem solver and also at $.378$ as shown in table with monitor & evaluator. It strongly negatively significantly correlated with issues management expert at the value of $-.245$ and $-.372$ with communication coordinator.

The mean value of application is 4.2 which is more than 4 that shows PROs are well aware of application in strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator, problem solver and issues management expert with the strong positive correlation at $.525$, $.378$, $.319$ and $.488$ respectively in addition to this deviation among responses is $.50$ and reliability of this variable is 70% while negatively highly insignificant correlation between application and communication coordinator is $.224$ and

negatively insignificantly correlated with issues management expert at $-.056$. With the mean value of 4.0 security variable shows that PROs are again aware and satisfied from security in strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator and problem solver with variation among responses is $.35$ with the 71% reliability of this variable, whereas highly positively correlations are shown in the table between security and strategy advisor, monitor & evaluator and problem solver as $.469$, $.590$ and $.388$ respectively. While the security is strongly negatively but significantly correlated with issues management expert and communication coordinator at the values of $-.106$ and $-.218$ respectively.

Practical Implications

It has been in the priorities of every educational institute to lessen the gaps between higher and lower levels of management and specifically their public relation officers' awareness about their proposed roles and work duties. PROs practical involvement in decision-making and utilization of technology and other essentials to better the job's intrinsic worth can be practiced to be as indispensable as an organizational structure to run an institute.

Future research

This study could also be used as a tipping stone for future research. Another new scale could be added to determine PROs' perceptions of global awareness about their job roles and how much prepared they are; it depends upon their university's higher management's efforts. However, another scale could measure role and work duties of public relation an element a few researchers believe in, is missing from current public relationship measures (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001). Researchers suggest that conversation is a key for organisations and publics to achieve common satisfaction (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Esrock & Leichty, 2000; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Kent and Taylor also expressed that new research needs to include role and work duties of public relation. While enhancing the image, the measurement of communication gap between higher management and PROs may support public relations practitioners and researchers to develop steady strategies and tactics to build more helpful relationships (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Different researchers recommend that a measure of organisational/public history is missing from relationship theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Coombs and Holladay resist that publics' perceptions of organisations depend upon the history of their interaction. They recommend that publics have positive interactions with an organisation, are further willing to think positively about an organisation after a crisis and vice versa if those perceptions were formerly negative. Future studies could investigate further into this dimension and maybe develop a scale that would measure role and work duties of public relation to more fully see how relationships between university higher management and PROs work. Besides that, different organisations could also adapt the current and future scales to determine employee perspectives on diversity and support organisations turn out to be better global members. Researchers need to clearly distinguish that the relationship factors recognized by eastern scholars may not be at work in other nations. However, these can be a starting place for international scholars who can add and well clarify the phenomena in their nations, which could prompt the distinguishing proof of significantly more relationship factors. Research such as this could lead to greater collaboration between practitioners and executive management in diverse regions of the world, leading to greater understanding of role and responsibilities of PROs globally. Lastly, continued research could lead to the establishment of a role and work duties of public relation and abridgement of communication gap's model of relationships.

Limitations

This study has few limitations. To begin with and most self-evident, this study cannot be generalised to PROs other than those living in the other regions of the continent. PROs working very close to the higher management and facing not any dearth in acquiring fitting knowledge and practicing it may have very unlike opinions about their relationship with the university and its higher management. This study is also limited by sample size. Though the study had an acceptable response rate, generally the study depends on the conclusion of a small number of PROs. (The margin of error for a sample of this size using a 95 percent confidence interval ranges from four to seven (c.f. Broom & Dozier, 1990). Researchers must also keep in mind that terms like trust, commitment, satisfaction, control mutuality, exchange relationship, and communal relationship are difficult to define as well as difficult to measure due to their subjective natures. One more possible limitation of this study is the interrelationship of some of the factors. The high correlations found among some of the factors could mean discriminate validity. In any case, some researchers believe this same result is very vital because it demonstrates that these factors are closely related to each other (Jo, Hon & Brunner, 2004).

Conclusion

The examination of public relations professionals 'practice in this study is demonstrating how to measure the demographics and applied infrastructural process can be better to understand the role and responsibilities and state of public relations relationships with internal hierarchy. The study also establishes diversified link to the relationship factors identified by Grunig and Huang (2000) and by Hon and Grunig (1999). This study helps to show the reliability of the scale as called for by Hon and Grunig. It is one of the growing collection of studies that tries to measure public relationships in real life settings; hence it is worthy of sharing (Hon & Brunner, 2002). Furthermore, such work may also help university leaders to develop more innovative approaches to achieve diversity by significantly acknowledging PROs to bring the public relations tools and measures into play, which will help universities of all regions to become better didactic partner and professional contributor to the world.

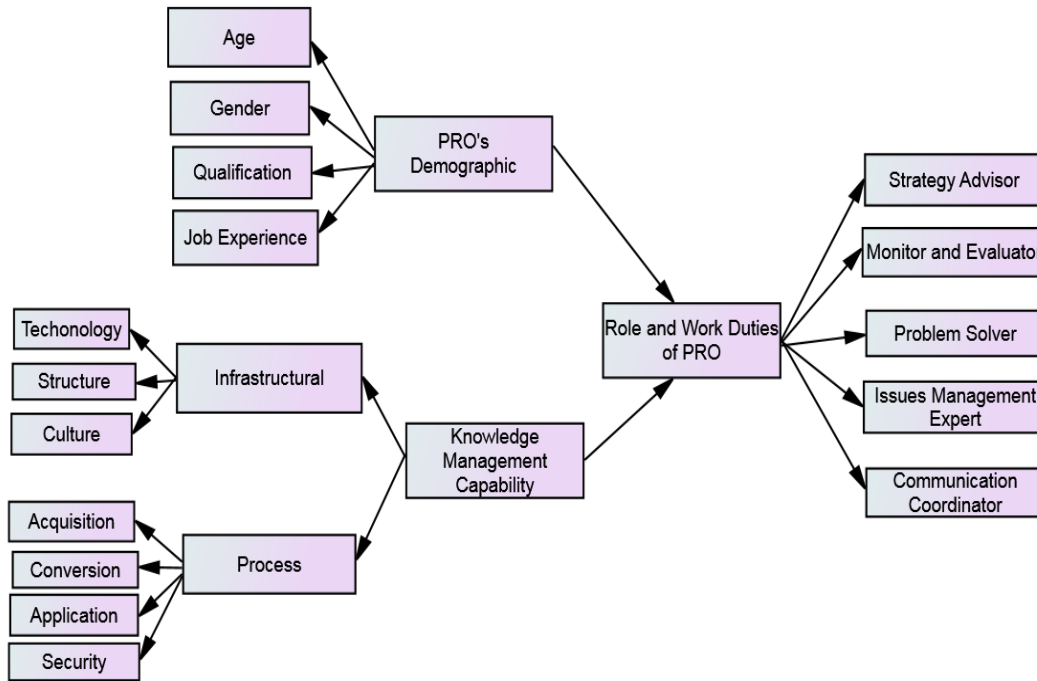


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

Table. 7.1 Correlation Among Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Technology	3.96	.53	.72												
2. Structure	4.11	.63	.75	.255**											
3. Culture	3.27	.55	.79	-.065	.063										
4. Acquisition	4.14	.62	.68	.555**	.293**	.157**									
5. Conversion	3.87	.36	.71	.144**	.136**	.075	.598**								
6. Application	4.23	.51	.70	.333**	.271**	-.091*	.466**	.622**							
7. Security	4.09	.35	.72	.462**	.191**	-.127**	.412**	.606**	.540**						
8. Advisor	4.03	.71	.72	.221**	.208**	-.059	.531**	.525**	.609**	.469**					
9. M_Evaluator	3.77	.29	.73	.328**	.179**	.031	.231**	.378**	.498**	.590**	.167**				
10. P-Solver	4.22	.48	.71	.497**	.320**	-.011	.663**	.488**	.319**	.388**	.351**	.207**			
11. IME	1.76	.20	.78	-.137**	-.294**	-.315**	-.394**	-.245**	-.056	-.109**	-.267**	.057	-.229**		
12. Coordinator	1.74	.16	.77	.004	-.218**	.105**	-.166**	-.372**	-.224**	-.218**	-.416**	.066	-.378**	.162**	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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