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Exploring The Reality Of Media Relations In Governmental Organizations In Saudi Arabia

Turki Ali Alrashid

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MEDIA RELATIONS IN SAUDI GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

EXPLORING THE REALITY OF MEDIA RELATIONS IN GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA

by

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To my mom and soul of my dad,
The world's best parents!
To my wife, my little baby,
my family, friends,
and readers!

ABSTRACT

Media relations in Saudi governmental organizations play an important role in transmitting news and messages of organizations to the publics. Although the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia is important, there is a lack of scientific studies in this area. Therefore, this dissertation studied the reality of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. The goal of this study was to understand the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that could positively impact the development of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. This dissertation used a quantitative research method through the use of a Qualtrics survey in order to ask Saudi government organizations' employees about the importance of employing qualified media competencies and the role that media relations' plans in spreading the organizations news and information in a professional manner. This dissertation focused on employees who work in the field of public and media relations in Saudi governmental organizations ($N = 280$) and their perceptions about media competencies and media relations plans. This study revealed several significant results, such as the importance of employing media competencies and work according to media relations plans. It is expected that this study will shed light on aspects that could develop media relations in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: media relations, public relations, media competencies, media relations plan, excellence theory

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: Media Relations in Saudi Arabia

The media and public relations industry are witnessing a significant and noticeable development in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government provides great support to this field to develop it and achieve its goals, and to serve the governmental organizations as well as the image of the country internationally. Although there are significant developments and support in the field of public and media relations, many challenges are facing the field of media relations. One of the most important challenges facing the media relations industry in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world is the lack of a correct understanding of this field (Kirat, 2005). This may lead to deficient performance of media relations and failing to achieve the goals they seek to reach.

Several studies indicated that the field of public relations in Saudi Arabia suffers from a misunderstanding (Alanazi, 1996). This misunderstanding led to a lack of correct understanding of public relations functions such as media relations. Also, most Arab countries suffer from this issue (Kirat, 2005). Many public and media relations practitioners in Saudi Arabia believe that the effectiveness of public relations and media departments is weak in Saudi Arabia due to a lack of adequate knowledge of public and media relations roles in the country, in addition to employing people who are not specialists (Alrashid, 2014). In addition, there are some obstacles that have negatively affected the work of media relations in the Saudi governmental organizations, such as the absence of specialized departments in media relations and the failure to allocate sufficient financial budget for this field to activate and develop it (Alrashid, 2014). One of the important topics discussed among media experts

in Saudi Arabia is the importance of the existence of a plan for media relations. The views of experts and practitioners of media relations understand the absence of media relations plans is one of the main obstacles that debilitate the performance of media relations in Saudi Arabia (AlJelwi, 2013).

The field of public relations in Saudi Arabia has developed significantly in the last two decades due to the great support of the government (Shaheen, 2012). However, this development did not reach a level of satisfaction due to the failure of many public relations and media departments to achieve their goals in the governmental organizations (Alrashid, 2014). The failure in achieving the goals is due to the lack of awareness of the tasks and duties of the public and media relations departments. Also, the dissatisfaction is due to the weak role of the media relations departments that are supposed to contribute to informing the public about the goals, vision, and mission of the organization (Kirat, 2005). Saudi Arabia today is seeking to develop its government agencies and raise the efficiency of its programs, including media programs. Media development is one of the goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

The Media and Saudi Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia's economy is supported on a number of pillars. Oil is the most significant economic pillar in Saudi Arabia, and the country is largely reliant on it (Moshashi et al., 2020). Saudi Arabia's economy has been harmed by the global drop in oil prices; as a result, the Kingdom has devised Vision 2030 to reduce its reliance on oil and to expand its economy by creating other sustainable pillars that would aid promote economic growth (Saudi Vision 2030, 2020). The Saudi Vision 2030 aims to create a vibrant society, an ambitious nation, and a thriving economy (Saudi Vision 2030, 2020). The media is one of the tools that the government seeks to develop through programs of the Saudi Vision 2030.

The National Transformation Program, which is one of the Saudi Vision 2030 programs (Saudi Vision, 2030), has seven initiatives for the Ministry of Media and is supposed to achieve its goals within 5 years. Those initiatives cost nearly \$ 1 billion (Albeayez, 2017). One of the goals of these initiatives is to contribute to the media in forming partnerships with the governmental and private sectors. These seven initiatives aim to develop the media side at the local and international levels (Albeayez, 2017). The Ministry of Media in Saudi Arabia created these initiatives within Vision 2030 to advance the system of media sectors that enhances the efforts of the Saudi media to achieve its goals and advance its work (SPA, 2020).

The Saudi government is seeking, through its vision, to develop and benefit from the digital revolution, which has been a major shift in the field of media (Albeayez, 2017). Initiatives of the Ministry of Information that seek to develop media work in Saudi Arabia are launching the Al-Akhbariya Company project, establishing media centers in major regions around the world, establishing a national center for media and advertising campaigns, launching media and advertising campaigns to highlight the Saudi identity around the world, establishing a media center to cover the Hajj season, and launching the Media National Affiliation Index (Almadinah, 2016). There is no doubt that these initiatives require highly qualified professional media practitioners and strategic media plans that help achieve the goals of these initiatives.

The Motivation of the Study

The field of media relations in Saudi Arabia is rapidly developing. It needs to be developed based on scientific studies that contribute to its development in a more advanced way. There are few studies on the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia. The lack of

studies in this field is one of the most important motives for conducting a scientific study seeking to develop the media relations aspect in Saudi Arabia. Numerous studies on the functions of public relations in Saudi Arabia indicated that this field needs more renewal and development (Alrashid, 2014). Therefore, the desire of many researchers to develop public relations functions, the most important of which is media relations, is one of the most important motives for conducting a study on the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia. The study seeks to investigate the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia by revealing the weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities that can be used in developing the field of media relations in the country.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia. This research seeks to identify the factors that contribute to the development of the field of media relations. It also seeks to be a valuable addition in the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia, where the field suffers from a lack of studies. Also, this research seeks to reach recommendations to provide a distinct addition that makes the performance of media relations more professional. Another important goal of this this research is to serve is the Saudi Vision 2030. The Saudi Vision 2030 aims to develop Saudi Arabia and its people in many areas, and the media is within these areas. Therefore, this research paper seeks to provide an addition that may contribute to the development of media work in line with the Saudi government's 2030 vision.

Definitions

It is important to identify and define the main variables for this dissertation. The definition of variables helps clarify the main concepts that this dissertation seeks to study.

These definitions have been drawn from the literature that develops a thorough understanding of the key concepts of this dissertation.

Public Relations

Media relations is one of the strategic public relations functions (Supa, 2014). Therefore, it is important to define public relations before exploring media relations. Public relations are an administrative function that requires planning, advertising, promotion research, and the ability to make collaborative decision-making (Heath & Coombs, 2012). These functions help the organization respond effectively to persons or organizations and to promote mutually beneficial relationships and achieve the organization's mission and vision (Heath & Coombs, 2012). There are other definitions that assist in understanding public relations. One of the most important definitions is the definition of the Public Relations Association of America (PRSA), which described public relations as a strategic communication function that is based on establishing positive mutual relationships between the organization and its clients (PRSA, 2021). There are many vital functions for public relations such as corporate communications, internal communications, crisis communications, marketing communications, investor relations communications, integrated marketing communications, media relations, social media, and content creation (PRSA, 2021). This dissertation focuses on the media relations function.

Media Relations

It is important to explain what media relations embody. According to Ridgway (1996), "The term 'media relations' refers to the communication pattern between an organization and those sections of the media that are interested in its activities" (p. 5). Swaan (2010) added "Media relations is described as the practitioner's *relationship* with the editors

and reporters of the mass media that function as communication channels directly to the organization's stakeholders" (p. 78). These definitions have indicated that media relations play a key role in organizing the communication process between organizations, journalists, and the organizations in which these journalists work.

Many public relations activities use the media to implement their strategies and achieve their goals (Etta, 2017). Media relations are among the most key areas that can be used in the corporate communication process (Wilcox, et al., 2014). The media serve many disciplines such as organizations, community members, suppliers, investors, and information consumers (Argenti, 2003). Therefore, media relations can be considered a basic function serving public relations in the process of communication between organizations and individuals. This implies that media relations are practiced by public relations practitioners to provide information and various news to the media in a professional and planned manner (Turk, 1985). The term media relations indicates that those practicing this job are affiliated with an organization so that these practitioners know their organization, its direction, and its goals, and the practice of these practitioners should be aligned with the views of their organizations (Etta, 2017) A media relations practitioner can be considered a -“pre_reporter”- for journalists because he/she provides them with the information they need (Supa, 2008).

Media Competencies

One of the variables that this dissertation will study is the existence of media competencies that lead the work of media relations. The term *media competencies* refers to the professional practitioners in media relations work. However, it is important to define the competencies in the media field. According to Chouhan & Srivastava (2014) "Competencies include the collection of success factors necessary for achieving important results in a

specific job or work role in a particular organization" (p. 14). In addition, competencies refer to a group of traits or habits that lead to effective and distinct job performances (McClelland, 1973). Several characteristics may apply to media competencies. Some of these characteristics are the knowledge that the practitioner possesses about his/her field of specialization and work, the skills possessed by the practitioner such as the skill of journalistic writing, and the motives that make practitioners work more responsibly in order to work more effectively (McClelland, 1973). Working on those skills contribute to activate the performance of public and media relations departments in the organizations. Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) is one of the unique theories that study how to activate the role of public relations departments in organizations. Therefore, Excellence Theory was used as theoretical framework for this study.

Excellence Theory as Theoretical Framework

Since media relations are considered one of the tools of public relations, the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) is considered an appropriate theoretical framework for this study as it is considered one of public (Rhee, 2002). Excellence Theory specializes in studying the activation of roles of public relations in organizations to make that role more professional (Rhee, 2002). Excellence Theory is considered a general theory in public relations (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). This theory focuses on how public relations contribute to making organizations more effective in the communication process, by organizing and managing public relations and media departments in organizations and making them more effective and professional (Grunig, 1992). Excellence Theory is considered one of the most predominant theories in the field of public relations (Kriyantono, 2019). Public relations practitioners are interested in this theory because it helps them to know communication

strategies and focus on communicating with the external audience of the organization (Kriyantono, 2019). In addition, Excellence Theory is such a popular theory that public relations schools continue to use it over the past 30 years (Kenny, 2016). As a result, this clearly demonstrates the importance of Excellence Theory.

Excellence Theory was composed by James Grunig (Grunig , 1992). It has identified major characteristics of effective public relations in organizations (Botan & Hazleton, 2010). The first characteristic is related to enabling the public relations function through the effective organization of public relations and giving it useful powers as an effective administrative function (Dozier et al., 2013). The second characteristic focuses on giving public relations and media managers effective administrative and executive roles (Dozier et al., 2013). The third characteristic refers to organizing the communication function so that public relations is a comprehensive communication function separate from marketing or other administrative functions that have nothing to do with communication (Grunig & Dozier, 2002). The fourth feature refers to building communication models between the public relations and the media (Botan & Hazleton, 2010). This would regulate the process of internal and external communication and the formation of relationships based on a two-way communication model consisting of two components that are message transmission and feedback (Botan & Hazleton, 2010). The fifth feature refers to the impact of the increased number of women in public relations field, as well as an indication that women had a hard time getting into management positions and this leads to focus on diversity in workplace (Grunig, 2006). The sixth component to Excellence Theory is the ethics in public relations (Grunig, 2006).

An advantage of Excellence Theory is that it focuses on public relations and media functions to make it an effective function in the organization. The Excellence Theory posits that the value of public relations and media is based on the social responsibility the organization seeks and the quality of relations with the public of the organization. It is also based on understanding these functions well and developing them for the organization to be effective (Grunig, 1992). In addition, Excellence Theory holds that public relations and media should seek to solve the problems of the public of the organization, which helps in achieving the objectives of the public in dealing with the organization as well as the goals of the organization (Grunig, 1992). Finally, the core of the excellence theory is the formation of a long-term relationship with the strategic publics of the organization (Grunig & Dozier, 2002). Forming a long-term relationship with the public of the organization is by using public relations and media tools such as media relations.

Excellence Theory is a suitable framework for this study because it focuses on the importance of public relations in strategic management and its important role in relationships with the strategic audience of organizations (Grunig, 2006). This study aims to know the role of media competencies in building a positive relationship with journalists and media organizations. This is compatible with the part that was presented by Excellence Theory on building a strategic relationship with the public of the organization (Grunig, 2006). The public of the organization here are journalists and press organizations. In addition, this study aims to find out the impact of media relations plans in increasing the spread of news and information about the organization. This part is consistent with Excellence Theory in activating the role of public relations through the effective spreading of news and information of the organization.

Public relations is a function that seeks to create beneficial relations with the public (Dozier et al., 2013). This goal is consistent with the endeavor of this study, focuses on building positive relationships with journalists and their organizations, as well as increasing the spread of useful news and information to the public of the organization. This practice can be carried out through media relations, which is a tool of public relations.

Other Studies about Media Relations

It is important to review recent studies in the field of media relations to reach a correct understanding of this field in Saudi Arabia. The field of media relations in Saudi Arabia suffers from a dearth of studies and research. This may be one of the reasons that led to the deficient performance of media relations in Saudi Arabia (Alrashid, 2014). In addition, the concept of public relations in Saudi Arabia suffers from a misunderstanding of those working in the field or those who have relations in this field (Alanazi, 1996) An old study indicated that public relations in Saudi Arabia will suffer from obstacles in the process of planning its communication activities, such as media relations, which affects the achievement of its goals (Hussein et al., 1992).

Communication with external audiences is one of the most important goals of media relations (Etta, 2017). This communication with the public is through press conferences, sending news reports, the spokesperson, and using mass communication methods such as television, radio, and newspapers (Howard & Mathews, 2013). Some researchers in the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia indicated that there are a few obstacles that hinder the work of media relations, and these obstacles are the absence of guidelines and plans regulating the work of media relations, in addition to the absence of media competencies specialized in media relations (Hussein et al., 1992). Also, some researchers indicated another

issue that public relations departments suffer from through their media work, such as the lack of transparency and clarity while communicating with the publics, and this is due to the lack of experience and the lack of knowledge in the correct methods of practicing public and media relations in Saudi Arabia (Albazie, 2010).

Because of the absence of studies on media relations in Saudi Arabia, this literature review will be an opportunity to present the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia and add to it some recent studies in the same field from the views of researchers around the world. Therefore, it is important to point out the importance and roles of the media relations function.

Media relations are looking for exciting opportunities and events to transform them into important news programs with media coverage that attracts the attention of the masses (Howard & Mathews, 2013). Knowing and understanding public relations requirements helps public and media relations practitioners realize the significant importance of the role of media relations as a sensitive function of public relations that contributes to achieving the communication goals of organizations (Alrashid, 2014).

One of the most important tasks of media relations is to create positive relationships between public relations practitioners and workers in media organizations. Maintaining this relationship is important, and it is one of the responsibilities of workers in public relations and media departments in organizations (Tallapragada et al., 2012). One of the duties of workers in public relations and media departments is to present news and press releases to journalists as a kind of their main task (Larsson, 2009). In contrast, some journalists see that practitioners in public relations and media departments have a lack of knowledge in media standards and journalistic practices, and this causes a gap between the two parties (Sallot &

Johnson, 2006). Therefore, it is important for public relations and media practitioners to know how to effectively communicate with media professionals to build a positive relationship between the two parties.

Media Relations urges its employees to be trusted sources by providing news organizations with correct and important news (Tallapragada et al., 2012). Likewise, media relations contribute to providing clear evidence of professional behaviors that practitioners can use, such as providing journalists with useful information, making themselves available to the media, and responding to media inquiries in a timely and professional manner (Callison & Seltzer, 2010). There are various strategies for media relations. One of the most important strategies is to provide news stories about organizations, interviews, and future plans to the media on a continuous basis because this strategy helps gain the trust of journalists (Ledingham & Bruning, 2009). One of the important aspects of media relations is that its employees should know the journalist's orientation and style in writing news reports and what journalist interests and seeks to be covered (Pang, 2010). This helps practitioners in public relations and media departments build a positive and effective relationship with media professionals and their organizations.

There are several basics that a public relations and media practitioner should know when providing news. These basics are sending press releases and reports, providing information to journalists, and responding to inquiries from journalists and the media (Cho, 2006; Tallapragada et al., 2012). Knowing these basics increases the importance of media relations work in organizations. These basics can be gained through professional training and practice.

Media relations have become one of the fields that organizations are interested in, whether in the governmental or private sector. Media relations strategies help achieve the main goals of organizations, and for this reason, media relations have become an important function that its tasks are discussed at the top management table in organizations (Alrashid, 2014). In addition, media relations help build a positive and distinctive image of the organization (Briley et al., 2000).

In recent times, the media has improved. This development was due to the development of communication and media technologies which led to an increase in the degree of complexity in dealing with the media (Baran, 2004). Consequently, organizations need to understand this development and how to deal with the advanced media through preparing and organizing appropriate media materials and opening communication channels with Journalists in a flexible manner, which should all be done by practitioners in media relations (Etta, 2017). This made media relations a valuable resource that helps public relations and media departments in organizations achieve their goal by reaching the masses of the organization (Etta, 2017). Understanding and realizing the function of media relations in organizations contribute to building and maintaining long term relationships with the masses of the organization both on insiders and outsiders (Howard, 2004).

Organizations' awareness of the importance of media relations makes their media performance more effective. Organizations need to be informed in publishing news related to the organization. Here comes the role of practitioners in the department of public relations and media to communicate with the media to cover the events of the organization (Tallapragada et al., 2012). Consequently, public relations practitioners should have a

prominent level of communication that contributes to making their interactions with journalists more professional (Waters et al., 2010).

Organizations, whether private or governmental, may run media campaigns to promote a service or an image and reputation of the organization. Here comes the role of media relations that contribute to designing media plans and building messages that interest audiences and attract their attention (Alrashid, 2014). In addition, media relations and its campaigns are important in spreading the organization's name, identity, and services, to the public opinion, which leads to building a distinctive image and raising the level of trust among the masses towards the organization (Tilley, 2005). All of this gives an important indication about the importance of media relations in organizations. Realizing the importance of media relations helps to perform media relations roles effectively.

Media Relations Roles

Media relations in governmental or private organizations work with media organizations and journalists to inform the public about the organization's policies, work, and missions in a positive manner consistent with media values such as credibility (Swaan, 2010). There are five basic elements that are the cornerstone of media relations work. These elements are planning, defining media tactics, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Brewer & Grumbles, 2013). Public relations and media practitioners have to train and learn media management principles because they will undertake and embrace media tasks such as communicating with Journalists (Nair, 2004). The tasks performed by public relations and media practitioners show the importance of the relationship between them and journalists. Therefore, this relationship must build an understanding of the common roles between the

two parties, and this assists them in comprehending the various media relations programs. (Alrashid, 2014).

When working with journalists, media relations professionals must be mindful of the importance of time, hence it is important for media relations practitioners to set deadlines for releasing news (Howard & Mathews, 2013). Therefore, respecting the agreed upon time between journalists and media relations practitioners contributes to building a positive relationship between the two parties (Alrashid, 2014). Another valuable tool of public and media relations is the presence of the spokesperson for the organization (Howard & Mathews, 2013). It is important that the spokesperson of the organization can communicate and deal efficiently with journalists and media organizations and provide them with correct information (Howard & Mathews, 2013). Communication experts have always preferred to be the spokesperson from the organization's Public Relations and Media Department (Smith, 2020).

Media Relations Plans

Effective media relations plans are those that consider the understanding of the organization and its policies (Howard & Mathews, 2013). In contrast, effective organizations are those that support public relations and media departments by developing effective media relations plans. Media relations plans should contain various basic steps as well as a statement indicating the organization's commitment to supporting the media relations plan, clarifying its purpose, and defining the responsibilities of the media relations practitioners (The Hartford Loss Control Department, 2000). In general, the media relations plan should be consistent with the organization's goals and policies. In addition, media relations plans let

journalists know the organization's goals and policies, which makes the organization's media work more effective and beneficial (Ridgway, 1996).

Media relations plans should consider various key points. It should include how to develop the relationship with the masses, conduct research and evaluation, and how to use the internal and external means of communication for the organization (Supa, 2008). The relationship with the media is one of the most important points in media relations plans. Effective media relations plans are those that refer to steps that seek to establish a long-term relationship with the media (Howard, 2004). Creating plans for media relations in organizations contribute to activating and developing the role of public relations and media departments in organizations. This activation is consistent with the excellence theory that focuses on activating the role of public relations and the media to contribute to achieving the goals of the organizations (Grunig, 1992).

From the previous literature review, it was clear that some steps could lead to improve and activate the role of media and public relations departments in Saudi governmental organizations. These steps are employing media competencies and working based on a media relations plan. To get accurate results, this dissertation proposed two hypotheses and two research questions that could help to know whether media competencies and media relations plans have a role in improving the field of media and public relations departments in governmental organizations.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Saudi government media suffers from problems that impede its aspirations and goal achievements (AlShubaily, 2013). Some of the problems indicate that the reasons are organizational, such as the absence of media relations practitioners (Alrashid, 2014). The

absence of media relations practitioners in governmental organizations has resulted in weak media roles in Saudi governmental organizations (Kirat, 2005). It is important to employ media competencies that professionally play the media role because they could lead to achieving the goals of the media organization. The media competencies may work under the Public Relations and Media Department because of its strategic link to the Public Relations function. (Wilcox, et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important to have specialized and professionally trained media cadres to enhance media work and achieve its goals. The dissertation presents the first hypothesis, which is:

H1: Media competencies in the Saudi governmental organizations relate positively to building relationships with journalists and media organizations.

RQ1: Do media competencies in media and public relations departments in governmental organizations relate to building relationships with journalists and media organizations?

Regarding the presence of media competencies, it is important that these media relations competencies work based on plans that organize the media relations work in the Public Relations and Media Department (Alrashid, 2014). It is important for this planning to be based on planning foundations in the field of public relations and media. Planning for the field of public relations and media begins with the research and analysis stage, then comes the stage of setting goals and creating a flexible work plan, and then it ends with the evaluation of the results (Van Ruler, 2015). This is what most public relations and media departments in Saudi Arabia lack due to the absence of media relations concept. It is important to do this planning because it helps make media relations work more

professionally. Based on that, this dissertation proposes the following hypothesis and the following research question:

H2: Media relations plans will have a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations.

RQ2: Do media relations plans relate to increasing the spread of news and information about Saudi governmental organizations?

Summary

Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) is consistent with the objectives of this study, which could seek to develop the performance of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. Excellence Theory focuses on activating the performance of public relations and media departments (Grunig, 1992). Consequently, this study sought to study two hypotheses and two research questions which are consistent to Excellence Theory. The first hypothesis H1 is that media competencies in the Saudi governmental organizations relate positively to building relationships with journalists and media organizations. The first research question RQ1: Do media competencies in media and public relations departments in governmental organizations relate to building relationships with journalists and media organizations? In addition to that, H2 is that media relations plans will have a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations. RQ2 is that: Do media relations plans relate to increasing the spread of news and information about Saudi governmental organizations? Testing the two hypotheses and answering the two research questions could lead to understanding the performance of public relations and media departments in Saudi government organizations.

The next chapters provided a quantitative method that tested and analyzed the two hypotheses and research questions. The analysis chapter provided significant results that could lead to improve the public relations and media departments in Saudi government organizations. After that, the discussion chapter explained the results and how they could improve that field. Also, the discussion chapter provided some important parts like contributions, limitations, and future research. More details were provided in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Design

This dissertation's research design was an online survey using Qualtrics and was developed to investigate governmental sector employees' opinions about media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. This method is considered one of the best methods that have been used to collect data to analyze a large population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). This method contributed to understanding two aspects of media relations in Saudi Arabia: the role of the media relations competencies and the role of media relations plans in spreading news and information about the organization. The number of participants was two hundred and eighty ($N = 280$) employees who were 18 or older. This dissertation illustrates how the survey's outreach was maximized using a social network platform called WhatsApp, as this app is one of the widely used communication applications in Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani, 2020).

The survey was divided into three sections in order to test the two hypotheses and answer the two research questions that aimed to explore employees' perspectives about media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. In the first section, the participants were asked some demographic questions to identify the differences and similarities among the study's participants (as shown in Table 1). The second section of the questions focused on the relationships between media competencies, journalists and media organizations (as shown in Table 2). Section two asks questions about the factors that positively affect building relationships between media competencies and journalists. These questions closely examined if the media specialist understands the profession of journalists, the importance of the role of journalism, the type of important news and information, the motive for building a

relationship, the importance of media relations, and ethical standards. The third section investigated the impact of media relations and the plans to increase spreading of news and information about governmental organizations (as shown in Table 3). Section three included questions about the factors that positively affect the increasing spread of news and information about governmental organizations. These factors were the professional manner, the usefulness of the media, the facilitating work of media activities, the building of reputation, promoting of organization's activities, and the necessity of having a media relations plan.

Participants

The target sample in this study were employees in the field of public relations and media in governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia, regardless of their job levels, and it included males, females and non-binary identifying individuals. This study sought to reach them by sending a Qualtrics survey and a snowball method via WhatsApp, chosen because it is one of the most widely used communication applications in Saudi society (Alzahrani, 2020). Moreover, the WhatsApp platform is used by many people in Saudi Arabia, widely covering differences in age, sex, and education and income levels. This means that the WhatsApp application was the right method to present the questionnaire among the sample target. Therefore, an invitation was sent through the WhatsApp platform to ask them to provide their answers (see Appendices A and B for invitation in both Arabic and English). Research participants were solicited with a concise description of the study (see Appendices C in English and Appendix D in Arabic).

To reach as many participants as possible, this dissertation used the snowball method. Snowball is most commonly used to allow a qualified participant to distribute an invitation to

others who are similar to them and who reflect the target sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Many people were reached thanks to Snowball. Research participants who agreed to be in the study clicked on the consent waiver and were redirected to the survey (see Appendices C and D for the consent waiver and questionnaire as Qualtrics they appear in English and as they appear in Arabic). The questions were presented in the Arabic language because this study focused on employees who work in the field of media and public relations in Saudi governmental organizations. This dissertation chose to present the questions in the Arabic language because it is the popular language in Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani, 2020), but these questions were also presented in English to ensure understanding among participants.

Since the participants differed in age, sex, education level, years of employment, and regions, the responses gave a diverse range of perspectives and thoughts. An invitation was made over WhatsApp platform messages, inviting people to offer their replies and share them with others who also worked in the media and public relations field in the Saudi governmental organizations. Details on the researcher and the research were included in the invitation to assure participants of the intention and goals for the survey. The number of survey respondents in this study, all working in media and public relations field in Saudi governmental organizations, is over two hundred. The reason for choosing this target number is based on a similar study of public sector employees conducted in Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani, 2020).

This survey was sent to approximately six hundred and fifty (650) people who work in media and public relations field in Saudi governmental organizations. Out of all the questions sent out, a total number of three hundred and forty-four ($N = 344$) people returned and sixty-four ($N = 64$) responses were removed during the process of cleaning the gathered

information. So, the effective sample participants were two hundred and eighty ($N = 280$). Some responses were removed due to the participants declining to participate in the survey, while others are excluded due to the participants being under 18 years old and others were removed because of incomplete questions (less than 30% of the question were complete).

Demographic Information

Demographic questions were asked. These questions inquired about their sex, age, education level, employment status, years of experience, and work areas as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Describing the Demographic Variables

Variables	N	%
Age		
18 – 28	29	10.4
29 – 39	126	45.0
40 – 50	67	23.9
51 – 60	22	7.9
Above 60	6	2.1
No response	30	10.7
Sex		
Male	254	90.7
Female	25	8.9
No Response	1	0.4
Education Level		
Less than High School diploma	2	0.7
High School degree or equivalent (G.E.D)	8	2.9
Some College, no degree	2	0.7
Associate Degree (AA, AS)	12	4.3
Bachelor’s degree (BA, BS)	122	43.6
Master’s Degree (MA, MS, MEd)	89	31.8
Professional Degree (MD, DDS, DVM)	10	3.6
Doctorate (PhD, EdD)	34	12.1
No Response	1	0.4
Employment Status		
Employed full time	263	93.9
Employed part-time	8	2.9
Retired	6	2.1
No Response	3	1.1

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Region		
North	3	1.1
Middle	202	72.1
East	19	6.8
West	37	13.2
South	15	5.4
Outside Saudi	4	1.4
Duration of Employment (Years)		
1 – 8	137	48.9
9 – 16	84	30
17 – 24	33	11.8
25 – 32	7	2.5
33 – 40	5	1.8
No Response	14	5.0

There were two hundred and fifty-four male ($N = 254$) and twenty-five female ($N = 25$) female participants with one unspecified sex ($N = 1$) as shown in figure 1. This indicated that 90.7% of the sample participants that work in media and public relations in Saudi governmental organizations are male, while 8.9% were female and 0.4% of the participant fail to respond. These figures did not indicate a sufficient diversity of sexes. The percentage of women participating in the survey was much lower than that of men because the percentage of women working in Saudi Arabia is about 33% of the total number of workers in the Saudi labor market (Asharq Al-awsat, 2021). The average age of the participants was 38 years old, with a minimum age of 21 years, and the oldest participant being 70 years old as shown in figure 2. Most of the participants were between the ages of 29 years old and 39 years old, while those that are 60 years and above were the fewest participants. Thirty (30) out of the total respondents did not

response to know their age, this is expected as age is one of the information people in Saudi find difficult to release.

Figure 1
Pie Chart of the Gender distribution of the Participants

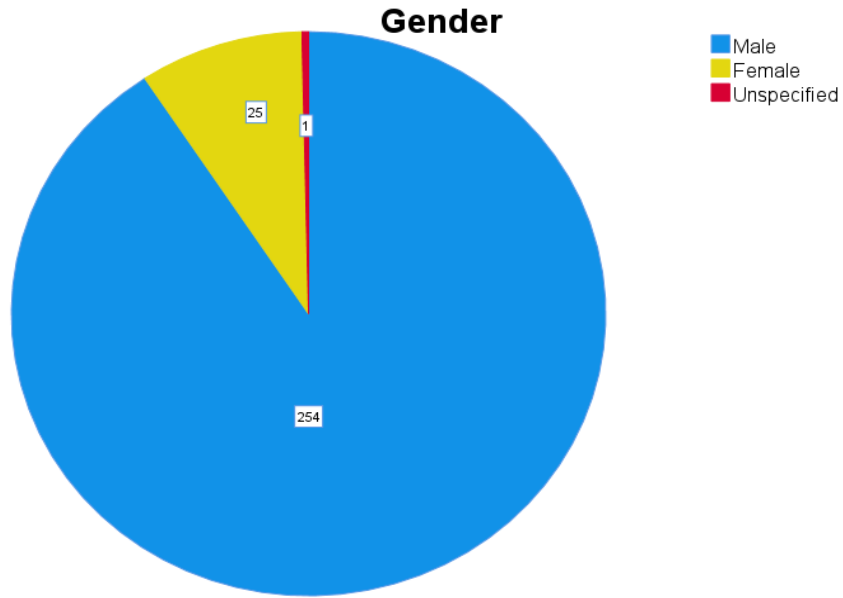
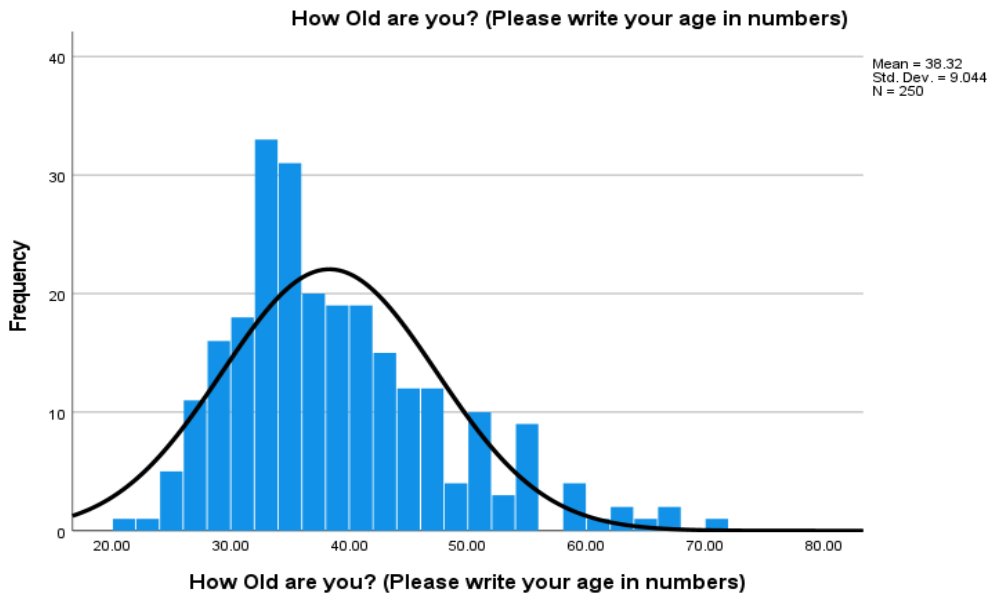


Figure 2
Histogram of the age of participants



The education level of the participants showed that the highest number of participants are those that had bachelor’s degrees (e.g. BA, BS) totaling one hundred and twenty-two ($N = 122$) participants (43.6%) and participants with Master’s degrees (e.g. MA, MS, Med) have ($N = 89$) participants (31.9%), while participants with less than a high school diploma have the least with 0.7% participants while 0.4% ($N = 1$) of the participants did not respond. The Educational Level distribution showed that the majority of those that are employed in media and public relations field in the government sector have an associate degree or higher. Also, the participant's experience of work was explored with the average years of work experience of the participants was approximately 9 years. The majority of the participants have worked between one to eight years (1 – 8 years) this amount to 48.9% of the total participants, and Those that have worked between thirty-three to forty years (33 – 40) are the fewest while 5% (14) of the respondents fail to provide response. Figure 3 and 4 showed the bar chart of the educational level of the participants and the duration of employment respectively.

Figure 3
Bar Chart of the Educational Level

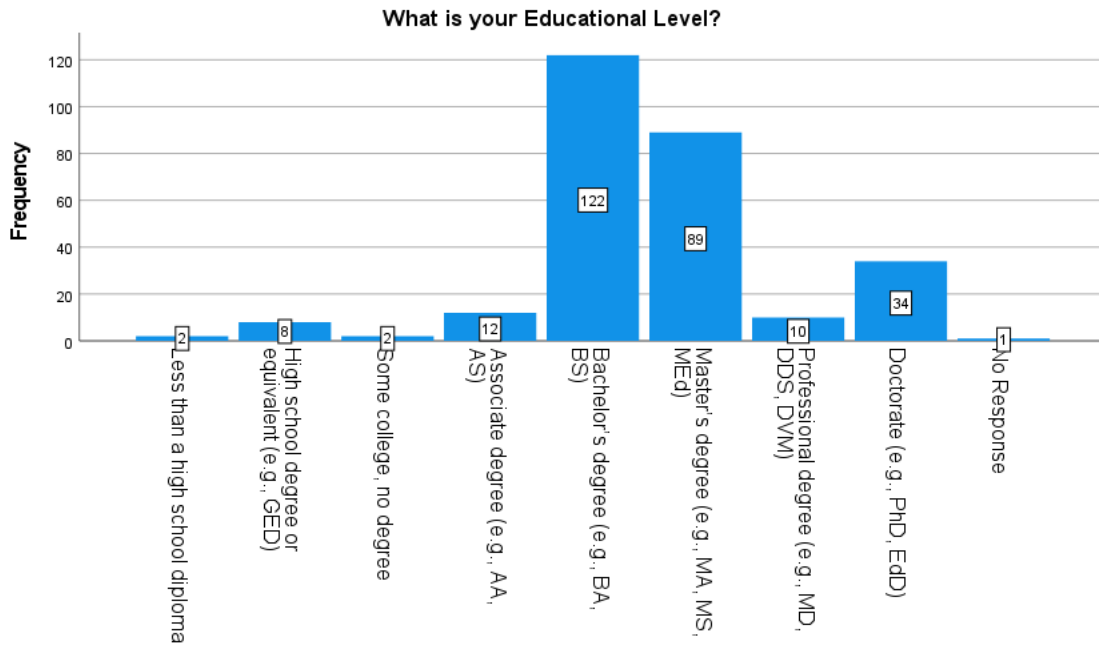


Figure 4
Bar Chart of Duration of Employment

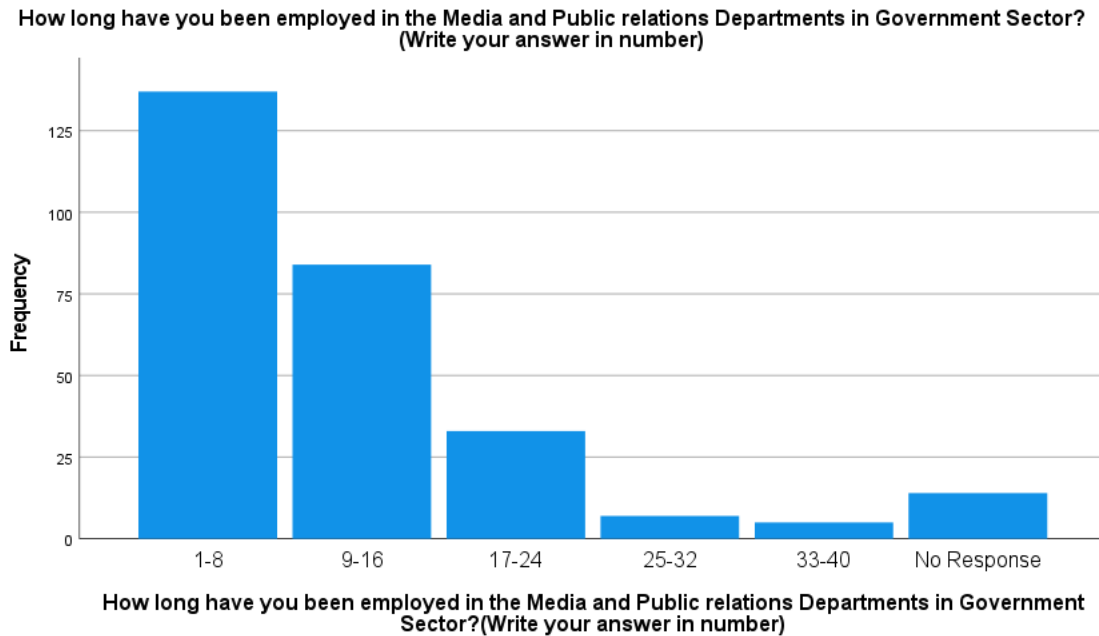
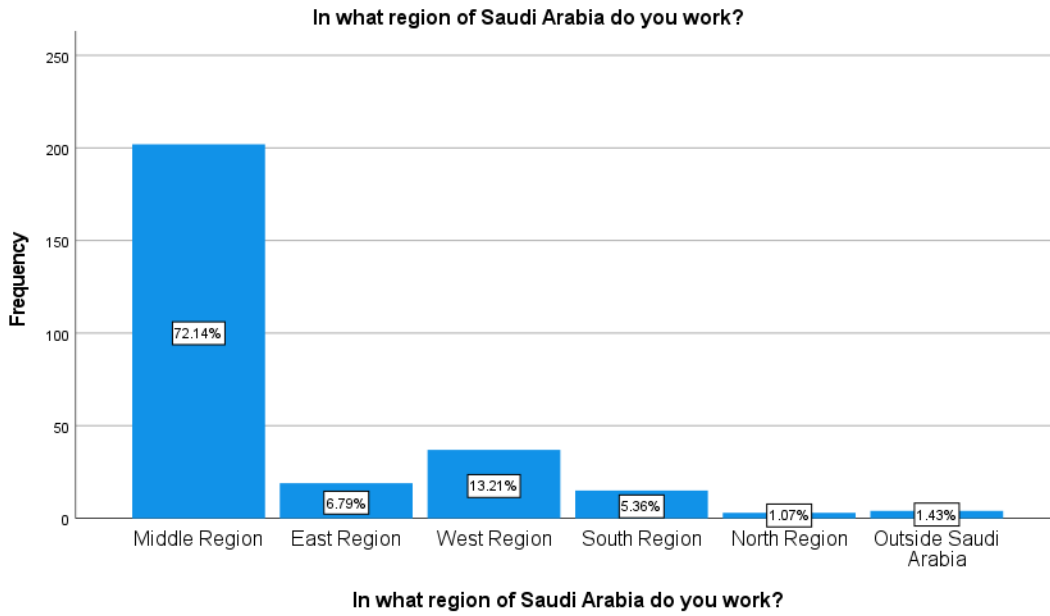


Figure 5
Bar Chart of Region of Saudi Arabia



The areas of the participants were included to explore how media and public relations in governmental organizations were perceived in each region. The result revealed that ($N = 3$) of the participants were from the North region, ($N = 15$) from the South region, ($N = 19$) from the East region, ($N = 37$) from the West region, ($N = 4$) from outside Saudi Arabia, while ($N = 202$) from the Middle region. This indicates that the majority 72.1% were from the Middle region (as shown in figure 5 above).

Demographic questions were asked to ensure that the study's expectations were met, and they had applied greater certainty to it (Alzahrani, 2020). They revealed various descriptions of the sample study that assisted the researcher in comprehending the study's findings (Alzahrani, 2020). However, because this study focused on public relations and media employees who work in Saudi government organizations, the findings could not be applied to the private sector.

Measurement

For this dissertation, a Likert 5-point scale was designed and used to measure the perspectives of public relations and media employees in Saudi governmental organizations which identified the key points of this study. Twelve items were presented to the participants in the survey. These items were divided into two main points: media competencies and media relation plan, subdividing the media competencies and media relations plan into six items each. The first part on media competencies was designed to ask about the factors that measured media competencies such as understanding the profession of journalists, the importance of the role of journalism, the type of important news and information, the motive for building a relationship, the importance of media relations, and ethical standards. Items about positive relationships were asked to explore how that might influence the media and public relations. The second part measured how media relations plans have a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations. These items were focused on factors including professional manner, the appropriate type of media, the facilitating work of media activities, the building of reputation, the promoting of organization's activities, and the necessity of having a media relations plan. The 5-Likert scale was used to determine the degree of agreement on these topics. The information gathered was organized based on how useful they were to the research. Each of the questions have five different response options and will be indicated as follows:

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

The participants were able to choose any option.

Reliability Tests

The importance of reliability was determined since it relates to the consistency of scores (Alzahrani, 2020). The data will be less useful for the test if there is a lack of consistency within a measurement (Ritter, 2010). Cronbach's alpha score has been one of the most often used to assess consistency because it provided consistent results (Ritter, 2010). Three tests were devised to assess the reliability. The first reliability test was conducted to measure all twelve items asked about media competencies and media relations plans. The reliability test for the twelve items of media competencies and media relations plans in governmental organizations in Saudi has a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.907$. The individual tests conducted on each section of six items measured the media competencies with a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.877$, and the media relations plans with a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.858$.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

The goal of this dissertation was to explore the reality and perspectives of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations through asking the media and public relations employees of Saudi governmental organizations about the principal factors mentioned above. There were two hypotheses and two research questions that were developed to investigate the reality of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations.

Hypothesis one

H1: Media competencies in the Saudi governmental organizations relate positively to building relationships with journalists and media organizations.

In this section, questions were asked to measure and understand the profession of journalists, the importance of the role of journalism, the type of important news and information, the motive for building a relationship, the importance of media relations, and ethical standards. These factors will improve the relationship between media competencies in governmental organizations and journalists and media organizations in Saudi. Hypothesis one assumed that media competencies in Saudi governmental organizations build positive relationships with the journalists and their media organizations, and will foster a positive relationship. A composite variable was created for all items concerning media competencies to lead to positive relations between the media competencies and journalists and media organizations (as shown in Table 2 below).

Table 2
One sample t-test result of media competencies

	N	M	SD	t	P
Media Competencies	278	4.012	0.755	88.599	0.000

The hypothesis was tested using a one-sample t-test with 278 participants with $t(278) = 88.599$ having p-value, $p < 0.001$, and a 95% confidence interval: [3.923, 4.101]. The null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, H1 was statistically significantly supported as shown from the above table and hence this dissertation concluded that the media competencies in the Saudi governmental organizations relate positively to building relationships with journalists and media organizations. This emphasized more on the importance of media competencies in Saudi governmental organizations in the relationships with media organizations and journalists.

Hypothesis two

H2: Media relations plans will have a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations.

To explore the media relations plans contributing towards increasing the spread of news and information about Saudi governmental organizations, questions were asked to be measured. Questions were focused on the professional approach of spreading news, identifying of media type, the facilitating work of the media activities, the reputations that were built by the media organizations, how the activities of the organizations were been promoted through media relations plan, and the necessity of having a media relations plan. A

composite variable was created for all the items in the media relations plan to relate to media and public relations (as shown in Table 3 below).

Table 3
One sample t-test result of media relations plan

	n	M	SD	t	P
Media Relations Plan	279	4.158	0.679	102.328	0.000

The hypothesis was tested using a one-sample t-test with 279 participants with $t(278) = 102.328$ having p-value, $p < 0.001$, and a 95% confidence interval: [4.078, 4.238]. The null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, H2 was statistically significantly supported as shown from the above table and hence this dissertation concluded that the media relations plan in the Saudi governmental organizations has a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations. This emphasizes more on the importance of working on media relations plans in Saudi governmental organizations to improve the media work.

Media Competencies in Media and Public Relations Departments

Q1: Do media competencies in media and public relations departments in governmental organizations relate to building relationships with journalists and media organizations?

The research question was designed to explore how Saudi media competencies relate to building relationships with journalists and media organizations. These research questions and hypothesis were developed to identify the opinion of media and public relations employees in governmental organizations. The first research question explored what elements could affect media competencies in Saudi governmental organization to build media relations

with journalists and media organizations. Six items asked about media competencies, item one focused on the awareness of professionalism of journalists in relating to media and public relations. This study utilized Statistical Package for social sciences (SPSS) to analyze the responses of the participants. A descriptive analysis was conducted to answer the research questions (analysis results shown in Table 4 below).

Table 4
Participants' responses about media competencies

	n	M	SD
The media specialist is aware of the profession of journalists and they are seeking to get the organization's news	278	3.86	0.964
The specialized employee in media knows the importance of the role of the press, which makes him/her/them capable of building positive media relations with journalists	275	4.05	0.937
The specialized employee in media can distinguish the type of news and information that the journalist wants, and this leads to building trust and forming a positive media relationship between the two parties	269	3.93	0.971
The specialized employee in media has the motive to build media relations with journalists because he/her/they knows the importance of this type of relationship in their work	270	4.13	0.935
The specialized employee in media realizes the importance of having media relations with journalists because it has a positive impact on spreading the organization's news and developing its reputation	268	4.20	0.879
The specialized employee in media is aware that the profession of media and public relations is based on ethical standards for the profession	267	4.00	0.991

Participants stated in the first item above the average of the 5-Likert scale which 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. About 73% reported being either agree or strongly agree with a reported mean, of 3.86 and a standard deviation, *SD* of 0.964, ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .964$), that they agreed with the media specialist awareness of the profession of journalists,

and they are seeking to get the organization's news. The second item asked if the specialized employee in media knows the importance of the role of the press that makes it build positive media relations with the journalists and the participants reported ($M = 4.05$, SD of 0.937). This indicated that most of the participants agreed that specialized employee in media knows the importance of the role of the press. The third item inquired about the specialized media employee been able to distinguish the types of news and information that journalist wants and that leads to building trust and forming a positive media relationship between the two parties, the responses of the participants reported ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.971$) which showed that about 75% of the participants agree with this question. The fourth item investigated if the specialized employee in media has a motivation of building media relations with journalists and the participant's response had ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.935$) which indicated that the majority agreed to this element to be effective in media and public relations in their work. The fifth item focused on whether the specialized employee in media realizes the importance of having media relations with journalists since it does have a positive impact in spreading the organization's news and develop its reputation, and about 85% of the participants agreed on the importance while less than 5% disagreed on this and it was reported with ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.879$). The last item in the question asked if the specialized employee in the media is aware of the ethical standards for the professions as the media and public relations are based on it, as this improv the media and public relations and about 73% of the participants agreed while less than 8% of the participants disagreed. There was ($M = 4$, $SD = 0.8789$). This indicated that the specialized employee in media is aware that the profession of media and public relations is based on ethical standards for the profession.

Media Relations Plan in Media and Public Relations Departments

Q2: Do media relations plans relate to increasing the spread of news and information about Saudi governmental organizations?

The second research question was designed to investigate whether media relations plan to increase the spread of news and information about Saudi governmental organizations. Six items were developed to find the opinion of the participants about the media relations plan, a descriptive analysis was run and the result is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Participants responses about the media relations plan

	n	M	SD
The media relations plan contributes to spreading the organization's news in a professional manner	279	4.03	0.911
The media relations plan helps to identify the media (such as Television, newspapers, social media, etc.) that are useful for spreading the organization's news	273	4.24	0.800
The media relations plan facilitates the work of the media activities carried out by the organization (media activities, for instance, press conferences)	273	4.09	0.844
The media relations plan helps in spreading positive information about the organization that has an effect on building a positive reputation for the organization	271	4.23	0.861
The media relations plan contributes to promoting the products, programs, and projects of the organization	274	4.23	0.800
The media relations plan is considered necessary in order to make the media work in a professional manner	272	4.23	0.838

Participants stated in the first item was above the average of the 5-Likert scale that 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. About 81% of the participants reportedly agree with the question and there was a reported ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.911$) that they agreed that media relations plan contributes to professionally spreading the organization's news. The second

item focused on whether a media relations plan can help in identifying the media that are useful for spreading the organization's news and about 85% of the participants agreed that and it was reported that ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.800$). This indicated that most of the participants agreed that a media relations plan helps to identify the media that are useful for spreading the organization's news. The third item focused on whether the media relations plan facilitates the work of the media activities carried out by the organizations such as press conferences etc. and the responses of the participants reported ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.844$) which showed that about 83% of the participants agreed that media relations plan facilitates the work of the media activities carried out by the organization. The fourth item investigated whether a media relations plan helps in spreading positive information about the organization and ($M = 4.23, SD = 0.861$) was reported from the participants and more than 80% of the participant agreed that media relations plan helps in spreading positive information about the organization and that has an effect on building a positive reputation for the organization. The fifth item focused on whether the media relations plan contributes to promoting the products, programs, and projects of the organization. From the responses of the participants about 88% of the participants agreed that media relations plan contributes to promoting the products, programs, and projects of the organization and it was reported with ($M = 4.23, SD = 0.800$). The last item asked whether the media relations plan is considered necessary to make the media work professionally and about 85% of the participants agreed while less than 5% of the participants disagreed. There was ($M = 4.23, SD = 0.838$). This indicated that the media relations plan is necessary to make the media work professionally.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This dissertation explored the reality of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. It is important because it revealed the weaknesses and strengths of media relations in governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia. After the dissertation studied the reality of media relations in the Saudi governmental organizations, this paper revealed that media competencies and work relating to media relations plans have a great role in the development of the field of media and public relations in Saudi government organizations. Thus, this dissertation showed that belief in these concepts proposed have an impact on the development of the field of media and public relations in Saudi governmental organizations, and this is consistent with the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to develop this field (Saudi Vision. 2020). Several important results have been demonstrated by this dissertation which are explained below. The results of this dissertation can lead to effective and modern ideas that contribute to making the media relations in Saudi Arabia more professional. To address these points, this chapter discusses the findings of the hypotheses and the research questions of the dissertation. Also, this chapter discusses the limitations that this dissertation encountered, as well as discusses contributions, and proposed future research.

Media Competencies

Hypothesis one (H1) assumed that media competencies in Saudi governmental organizations relate positively to building relationships with journalists and media organizations. Thus, H1 was statistically and significantly supported as shown in table 2. This hypothesis showed a positive relationship between media competencies in governmental organizations and journalists and media organizations. Testing this hypothesis revealed

important results that deserve mention. One of the most important results is that media competencies in Saudi governmental organizations can create a professional atmosphere that leads to the formation of positive and beneficial relationships with journalists and media organizations. The first main research question (RQ1) and its items helped to reach results that contributed to proving the hypothesis and providing many important results.

RQ1 was designed to identify the important factors that must be had in media competencies in order to build positive and effective relationships with journalists and their media organizations. This dissertation analyzed and explored those factors. The analysis presented showed results indicating the importance of employing media competencies in government organizations because they own unique factors that make their media work more professional in building media relations. This research question contained 6 items that aimed to explore the main factors that make media competencies able to build relationships with journalists.

In the first item, the majority of participants agreed that the media specialist is aware of the job of journalists and their quest to obtain news from government organizations. This result suggests that media competencies own awareness about the profession of journalism, and this contributes to creating a positive relationship and the understanding between the two parties is at a high level. In the second item, most participants agreed that the media specialist knows the importance of the press and its media role. This result suggests that media competencies know how journalism can serve their government organizations and this leads to the achievement of the media goals of the organization. Thus, this helps in creating positive media relations between media competencies in governmental organizations and journalists and journalistic organizations (PRSA, 2021). In the third item, most participants

agreed that the media specialist can distinguish between the news that the journalists need and provide them to him/her (Supa, 2008), and thus this helps the media specialist build trust with journalists and their organizations (Tallapragada et al., 2012). This result leads to that media competencies know how to build trust with journalists, as trust is one of the most important elements of relationships between people as well as in the workplace.

In the fourth item, most of the participants agreed that the media specialist is motivated (McClelland, 1973) to build media relations with journalists. That is because the media specialist knows that this type of relationship serves the organization in spreading its important news and may help achieve some of the organization's general goals. The fifth element, most of the participants agreed that the media specialist realizes the importance of media relations with journalists. This leads to the spreading the organization's news and thus builds its reputation well. This result gives the impression that media relations contribute to building the reputation of the organization in a professional manner. In the sixth element, most of the participants agreed that the media specialist is aware that the profession of media and public relations is based on ethical standards of the profession (PRSA, 2021). Therefore, this understanding contributes to the positive formation of media relations with journalists and media organizations, and this relationship is based on professional principles and values that serve the relationship.

Media Relations Plans

The second Hypothesis (H2) showed that the media relations plan in the Saudi governmental organizations has a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations. Thus, H2 was statistically and significantly supported. By testing this hypothesis, important results were revealed that

deserve to be mentioned. One of the most important results of this hypothesis is that the media relations plan can determine the appropriate media tactics for the organizations. Thus, this helps to achieve the organizations' strategic media goals. Media relations plan use tactics like determining the use of appropriate media, for instance, social media. Strategies are like building a reputation.

H2 was tested by RQ2 which has some items provided to explore how media relations plan in the Saudi governmental organizations has a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the governmental organizations. These items were intended to measure the differences in responses about some factors that referred to the importance of working based on a media relations plan. These factors are like understanding the professional manner of media relations plan, identifying the useful media, facilitating work of media activities, the building of reputation, the promoting of organization's activities, and the necessity of having a media relations plan.

Most of the participants in the survey indicated that the media relations plan has a large and influential role in spreading news and information about Saudi governmental organizations. The items used to test the second hypothesis led to important detailed results. In the first item, the participants agreed that the media relations plan contributes to spreading the organization's news in a professional manner (Turk, 1985). This means that the media relations plan can distinguish the quality of important news that serves the goals of the organization (Ridgway, 1996). In the second item, most of the participants agreed that the media relations plan helps in identifying the best media to publish and convey the news and messages of the organization. The reason for this is that the media relations plan can identify the target audience and thus media relations plan contribute to identifying the appropriate

media for that audience. In the third element, the majority of participants agreed that the media relations plan facilitates the work of media activities in the organization such as press conferences. The reason for this is that the media relations plan determines the steps for media events such as press conferences and who are the right people to represent the organization in the media. This result revealed that the media relations plan can make the necessary steps for all media events such as press interviews, media campaigns, media coverage, etc.

In the fourth element, the majority of participants agreed that the media relations plan has a strategic media role for the organization through building a reputation. This outcome showed that the media builds reputation by spreading the organization's news (Etta, 2017) over the long term. Thus, this leads people who follow the news and media a lot to have constant exposure to the name of the organization and thus to build a positive reputation about it. In the fifth element, most of the participants agreed that the media relations plan has an impact in promoting the programs and products of Saudi governmental organizations. This result shows that the media relations plan plays an important role in clarifying its efforts and achievements. A few participants disagreed on this point. This study found that some of the participants disagreed with that item because some media specialists in Saudi Arabia believe that the media relations plan has no relationship with the promotion of products, and the promotion is related to the field of marketing not the media. In the sixth element, the majority of participants agreed that a media relations plan is necessary because it makes media work more professional (Ridgway, 1996) in Saudi government organizations. Therefore, all the mentioned items indicated that the media relations plan has a positive relationship to increasing the spread of news and information about the Saudi governmental organizations.

In addition, the mentioned results showed that the media relations plan has a strategic role in achieving the goals of Saudi governmental organizations.

In conclusion, these results revealed the importance of employing specialized media competencies in public relations and media departments in Saudi governmental organizations because media competencies are fully aware of the importance of building media relations with journalists and their organizations. Also, the results showed the importance of working based on media relations plans in Saudi governmental organizations. These media relations plans contribute to the spreading of the organization's news and information; thus, it helps in achieving their short and long-term media goals.

Limitations

This study shows the importance of employing media competencies and working according to media relations plans. Thus, this leads to the development of the field of media relations in Saudi government organizations by creating more positive relationships between the government organizations and the media, and spreading the news and information about the government organizations in the media. The study showed important results and dimensions for the field of media relations. However, there are some limitations that the study encountered.

Usage of the online survey had significant benefits such as more efficiency to many participants, less time to gain many answers, and lower cost (Duffy et al., 2005). But in contrast, there were limitations in using the online survey. Among these limitations is that many of the target sample did not respond to the WhatsApp invitation that invited them to participate. It is possible that some are suspicious of such electronic messages, especially

with the spread of phishing messages and viruses spreading during this time and age. This may be the reason for some not responding to the WhatsApp invitation.

Second, one of the limitations that this study faced is the lack of scientific studies in the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia. This study tried to rely on some sources, but there were not enough sources that refer to the concept of media relations in Saudi Arabia. This limitation led the researcher to make an online survey that contributes to knowing the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia.

Third, this study explores the reality of media relations in Saudi governmental organizations. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the field of media and public relations in the Saudi private sector. The reason for this is because the Saudi private sector has a system and administrative structures that differ from the government sector.

Contributions

This study is an important addition to the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia because it helps to guide how to improve this field. The field of public relations and media is growing and developing rapidly and thus needs guidelines and structure in order to instill trust and accountability. As a result, this study keeps pace with these developments in order to provide a comprehensive explanation of the reality of media relations in Saudi Arabia. Also, this study is important because it helps to identify opportunities that may contribute to the development of public relations and the media in Saudi Arabia. The field of public relations and media is witnessing great development and expansion in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study can help practitioners in public relations and media to know the reality of the field, how to develop it, and what it needs. Also, this study is considered one of the

main modern scientific studies in the field of Saudi media relations. Consequently, this study is an important addition to the field of Saudi media relations because it provided some significant results that could be added to knowledge of the theory and research in this area.

The Saudi Vision 2030 aims to develop the country in many fields, and the media and public relations field is one of them. The aim of this study is to be compatible with the objectives of the Saudi Vision in developing media and public relations in the country's organizations. Also, Saudi Arabia today has become more open to the countries of the world, and this study gives a sufficient impression about the reality of media relations for those outside Saudi Arabia who are interested in learning about this field. Furthermore, this study may be an opportunity for researchers in the same field from the Arab Gulf countries to apply the same study and using the theory that this study used in their countries because the Saudi governmental organization system is somewhat similar to the governmental organization systems in some other Arabian Gulf countries.

Future Research

Saudi Arabia seeks to highlight its image globally by presenting its achievements and its economy, tourism, social traditions, and others (Saudi Vision, 2020). Highlighting the image may require major media efforts in order to reach people around the world. Therefore, this paper proposes future research on the role of international media relations in highlighting the image of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, globally. This future study may explore the importance of international media relations in highlighting the image of the country. Also, it is possible that this future study may explore effective ways in how to build international media relations with journalists around the world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

English WhatsApp Invitation

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Turki Alrashid. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Dakota, and I am currently conducting a study is titled "Exploring the reality of media relations in governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia".

This research study aims to understanding the importance of employing media competencies and working based on media relations plans that could positively impact the development of the field of media relations in Saudi Arabia.

You are invited to participate in this survey which takes about 3 to 5 minutes.

The target group to participate in this questionnaire are current employees or those who have previously worked in one of the communication, public relations and media departments in the Saudi government sector.

Please kindly answer all questions as accurately as you can. Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and all data will be anonymous.

You can skip any questions or stop at any time.

You can select Arabic or English to participate.

Questionnaire link: https://und.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3xjhIg4BnAGsJfM

Please share this WhatsApp invitation with others who are working in the same field, if possible.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance

Turki Alrashid
PhD Candidate
Communication Department, University of North Dakota

Appendix B

Arabic WhatsApp Invitation

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

السادة والسيدات الكرام ..

أنا تركي آل رشيد، مرشح دكتوراه في جامعة شمال داكوتا، وأقوم حالياً بدراسة بعنوان (استكشاف واقع العلاقات الإعلامية في المنظمات الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية).

هذه الدراسة البحثية تسعى إلى فهم أهمية توظيف الكفاءات الإعلامية والعمل على أساس خطط العلاقات الإعلامية التي من الممكن أن تؤثر إيجابياً على تطور مجال العلاقات الإعلامية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

انت مدعو للمشاركة في هذا الاستبيان الذي قد يستغرق حوالي 3 الى 5 دقائق.

الفئة المستهدفة للمشاركة في هذا الاستبيان هم العاملين الحاليين أو من سبق لهم العمل في إدارات الاتصال والعلاقات العامة والإعلام في القطاع الحكومي السعودي.

يرجى التكرم بالإجابة على جميع الأسئلة بدقة قدر ما استطعت. المشاركة في الاستبيان اختيارية وستعامل بسرية تامة، ويمكنك تخطي أي سؤال أو التوقف في أي وقت مع إمكانية تحديد اللغة العربية أو الانجليزية للمشاركة.

رابط الاستبانة: https://und.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3xjhIg4BnAGsJfM

فضلاً نشر ومشاركة هذه الدعوة مع الآخرين ممن يعملون في نفس المجال إن أمكن.

شاكر لكم تعاونكم مقدماً.

تركي آل رشيد
مرشح دكتوراه
قسم الاتصال
جامعة شمال داكوتا

Appendix C

English Survey

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Institutional Review Board

Study Information Sheet

Title of Project: Exploring the Reality of Media Relations in Governmental Organizations in Saudi Arabia

Principal Investigator: Turki Ali Alrashid, turki.alrashid@und.edu

Advisor: Dr. Pamela Kalbfleisch, 701.777.6369, pamela.kalbfleisch@UND.edu

Purpose of the Study:

This research study aims to understanding the importance of employing media competencies and working based on media relations plans that could positively impact the development of the field of media relations in governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia.

Procedures to be followed:

You will be asked to answer 18 questions on a survey. Please answer them carefully.

If you are not working in Saudi's government sector and media and public relations department, please don't answer the survey.

Risks:

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits:

This research might provide a better understanding about how important is employing media competencies and working based on media relations plans that could positively impact the development of the field of media relations in governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia.

Duration:

It will take about 3-5 minutes to complete the questions.

Statement of Confidentiality:

The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Turki Alrashid. You may ask any questions you have now turki.alrashid@und.edu . If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Dr. Pamela Kalbfleisch, 701.777.6369, pamela.kalbfleisch@UND.edu during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns

about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website “Information for Research Participants”

<http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html>

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation:

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time.

You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age older to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

- I agree to participate

- I don't agree to participate

Online Survey

Table 1: Demographic Data

1- How old are you? (Please write your age in numbers)
2- What is your sex? 1) Male 2) Female
3- What is your educational level? 1) Less than a high school diploma 2) High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED) 3) Some college, no degree 4) Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS) 5) Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS) 6) Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS, MEd) 7) Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, DVM) 8) Doctorate (e.g., PhD, EdD)
4- What is your current employment status? 1) Employed full time 2) Employed part-time 3) Retired
5- How long have you been employed in the Media and Public relations Departments in the government sector? (Write your answer in numbers)
6- In which region of Saudi Arabia do you work?

- 1) Middle Region
- 2) East Region
- 3) West Region
- 4) South Region
- 5) North Region
- 6) Outside Saudi Arabia

Table 2: Media Competencies

7- The media specialist is aware of the profession of journalists and their seeking to get the organization's news

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Agree
- 5) Strongly Agree

8- The specialized employee in media knows the importance of the role of the press, which makes him/her/them capable of building positive media relations with journalists

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Agree
- 5) Strongly Agree

9- The specialized employee in media can distinguish the type of news and information that the journalist wants, and this leads to building trust and forming a positive media relationship between the two parties

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Agree
- 5) Strongly Agree

10- The specialized employee in media has the motive to build media relations with journalists because he/her/they knows the importance of this type of relationship in their work

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral
- 4) Agree
- 5) Strongly Agree

11- The specialized employee in media realizes the importance of having media relations with journalists because it has a positive impact on spreading the organization's news and the development of its reputation

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Neutral

4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree
12- The specialized employee in media is aware that the profession of media and public relations is based on ethical standards for the profession 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree

Table 3: Media Relations Plans

13- The media relations plan contributes to spreading the organization's news in a professional manner. 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly Agree
14- The media relations plan helps to identify the media (such as Television, Newspaper, Social media, etc.) that are useful for spreading the organization's news. 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree

MEDIA RELATIONS IN SAUDI GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

3) Neutral

4) Agree

5) Strongly Agree

15- The media relations plan facilitates the work of the media activities carried out by the organization (media activities, for instance press conferences).

1) Strongly Disagree

2) Disagree

3) Neutral

4) Agree

5) Strongly Agree

16- The media relations plan helps in spreading positive information about the organization that has an effect on building a positive reputation for the organization

1) Strongly Disagree

2) Disagree

3) Neutral

4) Agree

5) Strongly Agree

17- The media relations plan contributes to promoting the products, programs and projects of the organization

1) Strongly Disagree

2) Disagree

3) Neutral

4) Agree

5) Strongly Agree

18- The media relations plan is considered necessary in order to make the media work in a professional manner

1) Strongly Disagree

2) Disagree

3) Neutral

4) Agree

5) Strongly Agree

Thank you so much for your time spent taking this survey

Appendix D

Arabic Survey

جامعة شمال داكوتا

مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية

ورقة معلومات الدراسة

عنوان المشروع: استكشاف واقع العلاقات الإعلامية في المنظمات الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

الباحث الرئيسي: تركي بن علي ال رشيد turki.alrashid@und.edu

المستشار: الدكتورة بامبلا كالفليش 701.777.6369 ، pamela.kalbfleisch@UND.edu

الغرض من الدراسة:

تسعى هذه الدراسة البحثية إلى فهم أهمية توظيف الكفاءات الإعلامية والعمل على أساس خطط العلاقات الإعلامية والتي يمكن أن تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على تطور مجال العلاقات الإعلامية في المنظمات الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

الإجراءات الواجب اتباعها:

سيطلب منك الإجابة على 18 سؤالاً في الاستبيان. الرجاء الإجابة عليها بعناية.

إذا كنت لا تعمل في القطاع الحكومي السعودي وإدارة الإعلام والعلاقات العامة، من فضلك لا تجيب على الاستبيان.

المخاطر:

لا توجد مخاطر على المشاركة في هذا البحث بخلاف تلك التي تمت تجربتها في الحياة اليومية.

الفوائد:

سيوفر هذا البحث فهماً أفضل لمدى أهمية توظيف الكفاءات الإعلامية والعمل وفقاً لخطط العلاقات الإعلامية والتي يمكن أن تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على تطوير مجال العلاقات الإعلامية في المنظمات الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

المدة:

سيستغرق إكمال الأسئلة حوالي 3-5 دقائق.

بيان الخصوصية:

لا يطلب الاستطلاع أي معلومات تحدد هوية المشارك في الاستبيان، مثل الاسم. لذلك، يتم تسجيل ردودك بشكل مجهول. إذا تم نشر هذا البحث، فلن يتم تضمين أي معلومات من شأنها أن تحدد هويتك.

سيتم التعامل مع جميع ردود الاستطلاع التي نلتقاها بسرية وتخزينها على خادم آمن. ومع ذلك، نظراً لإمكانية إكمال الاستبيان من أي جهاز كمبيوتر (على سبيل المثال، الحاسب الشخصي، أو في العمل، أو المدرسة)، فإننا غير قادرين على ضمان أمان الكمبيوتر الذي تختار إدخال ردودك عليه. بصفتك مشاركاً في دراستنا، يرجى التأكد من عدم وجود بعض برامج "key logging" التي يمكن استخدامها لتتبع أو التقاط البيانات التي تدخلها و/أو مواقع الويب التي تزورها .

الحق في طرح الأسئلة:

الباحث الذي أجرى هذه الدراسة هو تركي بن علي آل رشيد. يمكنك طرح أي أسئلة لديك الآن turki.alrashid@und.edu. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة أو مخاوف أو شكاوى فيما بعد حول البحث، فيرجى الاتصال بالدكتورة بامبلا كالفليش 701.777.6369 ، pamela.kalbfleisch@UND.edu خلال ساعات العمل اليومي.

إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، فيمكنك الاتصال بمجلس المراجعة المؤسسية بجامعة شمال داكوتا على 701.777.4279 أو UND.irb@UND.edu . يمكنك الاتصال بالمجلس بخصوص المشكلات أو الشكاوى أو المخاوف بشأن البحث. يرجى الاتصال بالمجلس إذا لم تتمكن من الوصول إلى فريق البحث، أو كنت ترغب في التحدث مع شخص مطلع ومستقل عن فريق البحث.

يمكن العثور على معلومات عامة حول موضوع البحث على موقع مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية "معلومات للمشاركين في البحث"

<http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html>

التعويض:

لن تحصل على تعويض عن مشاركتك.

المشاركة الطوعية:

المشاركة في هذا البحث غير إلزامية. يمكنك إيقاف مشاركتك في أي وقت. يمكنك رفض المشاركة أو اختيار التوقف عن المشاركة في أي وقت دون خسارة أي مزايا يحق لك الحصول عليها بخلاف ذلك.

لا يتوجب عليك الإجابة على أي أسئلة لا تريد الإجابة عليها.

يجب أن يكون عمرك 18 عامًا أو أكبر للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية.

يشير إكمال الاستبيان وإعادته إلى أنك قد قرأت المعلومات الواردة في هذا النموذج ووافقت على المشاركة في البحث.

يرجى الاحتفاظ بهذا النموذج لسجلتك أو للرجوع إليها في المستقبل.

- أوافق على المشاركة

- لا أوافق على المشاركة

الاستبيان

جدول 1: البيانات الديموغرافية

1- ما هو عمرك؟ (فضلاً أدخل العمر بالأرقام)
2- الجنس؟ (1) ذكر

2) أنثى
3- ما هو مستواك التعليمي؟ (1) أقل من شهادة الثانوية العامة (2) شهادة الثانوية العامة أو ما يعادلها (3) طالب/ة كلية (لم يحصل على الدرجة حتى الان) (4) دبلوم بعد الثانوية (5) درجة البكالوريوس (6) درجة الماجستير (7) دبلوم عالي (8) دكتوراه
4- ما هو وضعك الوظيفي الحالي؟ (1) موظف بدوام كامل (2) موظف بدوام جزئي (3) متقاعد
5- كم عدد السنوات التي عملت بها في إدارات الإعلام والعلاقات العامة في القطاع الحكومي؟ (فضلاً أدخل عدد السنوات بالأرقام)
6- في أي منطقة بالمملكة العربية السعودية تعمل؟ (1) المنطقة الوسطى (2) المنطقة الشرقية (3) المنطقة الغربية (4) المنطقة الجنوبية (5) المنطقة الشمالية

(6) خارج السعودية

جدول 2: الكفاءات الإعلامية

<p>7- الموظف المتخصص في الإعلام يفهم مهنة الصحفيين وسعيهم في الحصول على أخبار المنظمة.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>8- الموظف المتخصص في الإعلام يعرف أهمية دور الصحافة مما يجعله قادراً على بناء علاقات إعلامية إيجابية مع الصحفيين.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>9- يمكن للموظف المتخصص في الإعلام أن يميز نوع الأخبار والمعلومات التي يريدها الصحفي ويوفرها له، وهذا يؤدي إلى بناء الثقة وتكوين علاقة إعلامية إيجابية بين الطرفين.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p>

(5) أوافق بشدة
10- الموظف المتخصص في الإعلام لديه الدافع لبناء علاقات إعلامية مع الصحفيين لأنه يعرف أهمية هذا النوع من العلاقات في عمله. (1) غير موافق بشدة (2) غير موافق (3) محايد (4) أوافق (5) أوافق بشدة
11- يدرك الموظف المتخصص في الإعلام أهمية وجود علاقات إعلامية مع الصحفيين لما لها من أثر إيجابي في نشر أخبار المنظمة وتطوير سمعتها. (1) غير موافق بشدة (2) غير موافق (3) محايد (4) أوافق (5) أوافق بشدة
12- يدرك الموظف المتخصص في الاعلام أن مهنة الإعلام والعلاقات العامة تقوم على معايير أخلاقية للمهنة. (1) غير موافق بشدة (2) غير موافق (3) محايد (4) أوافق (5) أوافق بشدة

جدول 3: خطط العلاقات الإعلامية

<p>13- خطة العلاقات الإعلامية تساهم في نشر أخبار المنظمة بأسلوب مهني.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>14- خطة العلاقات الإعلامية تساعد في تحديد وسائل الإعلام المناسب استخدامها (مثل التلفزيون، الصحف، ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، إلخ) والتي تفيد في نشر أخبار المنظمة.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>15- خطة العلاقات الإعلامية تُسهل عمل الأنشطة الإعلامية التي تقوم بها المؤسسة (الأنشطة الإعلامية، على سبيل المثال، المؤتمرات الصحفية).</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>16- تساعد خطة العلاقات الإعلامية في نشر المعلومات الإيجابية والتي لها تأثير في بناء سمعة إيجابية عن المنظمة.</p>

<p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>17- تساهم خطة العلاقات الإعلامية في الترويج لمنتجات وبرامج ومشاريع المنظمة.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>
<p>18- تعتبر خطة العلاقات الإعلامية ضرورية لجعل العمل الإعلامي مهنيًا.</p> <p>(1) غير موافق بشدة</p> <p>(2) غير موافق</p> <p>(3) محايد</p> <p>(4) أوافق</p> <p>(5) أوافق بشدة</p>

شكرا جزيلاً على مشاركتك في الاستبيان.