



Research article

# Patterns, Practices and Social Media Engagement of Public Relations: A Comparative Study between Government and Corporate Organizations of Bangladesh

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## ABSTRACT

The emerging and impactful nature of growing concern over public relations in Bangladesh is remarkable, still, a dearth of studies analyzing its methods and trends is evident. This study is designed to find the patterns and practices of public relations in the government and corporate organizations of Bangladesh. The study has followed both quantitative and qualitative approaches using content analysis and Key Informant Interview (KII) methods for data collection. Content has been collected from six months of social media data (Facebook page) of two public organizations which are Khulna University and Bangladesh Bank, and two private organizations Northern University of Business and Technology and City Bank. Subsequently, the acquired data underwent rigorous analysis employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The researcher interviewed three key persons who are responsible public relations professionals of prominent public and corporate organizations. The study revealed that the means of communication and patterns and practices are quite similar in both public and private organizations. However, with a significant difference, the corporate sector is performing better in social media engagement due to a major difference in feedback-giving and audience engagement evolution. In response to the comments made on social media pages, government organizations did not provide any feedback whereas corporate organizations replied to a significant number, almost one-third of the comments. This indicates that the corporate sector outperforms audience engagement. The discussions from the Key Informant Interview portrayed both organizations using email as a formal way to communicate internally and externally along with WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet. Finally, an evident relationship observed between organizations and giving posts on their social media page is sustained.

## Introduction

The field of public relations (PR) encompasses the application of analytical methodologies and social scientific principles to examine prevailing patterns, anticipate their ramifications, offer guidance to organizational leaders, and execute strategic initiatives that cater to the mutual benefit of both the organization and the public (Volk, 2016). The process involves the advancement of a positive reputation and the establishment of a strong brand identity for an individual or organization by fostering a warm and amicable connection between the organization and its intended audience. In Bangladesh, numerous organizations, both governmental and private,

have recognized the importance of establishing Public Relations (PR) departments to enhance public engagement, facilitate effective communication, and mitigate potential crises. The Bangladesh Public Relations Association (BPRA), established in 1979, officially embraced this policy during its inaugural national convention in the same year.

This research has elucidated the intricacies of public relations communication within typical, strategically-oriented scenarios. The investigation encompassed an analysis of press release dissemination, engagement on social media platforms, and the decision-making processes of public relations officials.

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The purpose of public relations is to construct and establish public perception and sentiment. It has a significant influence. Public relations have become an integral component of modern mass communication processes. It is eager to promote organizational coordination and the design of PR programs to create and maintain favorable conditions for the organization. Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, used the term 'public relations' instead of 'state of mind' (Scherr, 2016). Moreover, this PR is a very new phenomenon in the current state of Bangladesh. The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) was founded in 1955, and in 1961, public relations professionals from all around the world collaborated to create a code of conduct. The IPRA formulated the code of ethics for public relations at its general meeting in Athens in May 1965. The Code of Athens was revised and updated at the 1968 IPRA council meeting in Tehran and was subsequently adopted by the majority of national PR associations worldwide. The Bangladesh Public Relations Association (BPR), which was founded in 1979, adopted it at its first national convention (Banglapedia, 2022). Now, many private and public organizations are maintained for effectively serving multiple purposes. Observable differences are seen in both sectors in terms of patterns, practices, and strategic means.

### Literature Review

#### *Public Relations in Contemporary Bangladeshi Society*

In the book 'Janasangjog' the author claims that industrialization, corporate competition, and non-governmental organizations have made public relations in Bangladesh a crucial and demanding aspect of contemporary life (Kader, 2021). Managing the connection between an institution or organization and its stakeholders is critical to its long-term viability in society, and public relations is a vital component of this effort. This profession must be the spokesman and mediator, reach the target audience, and control the public view of organizational crises via effective communication. Maintaining cordial ties with stakeholders requires effectively expressing messages through appropriate channels while upholding high ethical standards. Public relations professionals play a significant role in determining the outcome of any project or plan. Public relations practitioners face an uphill battle in the eyes of employers and colleagues alike due to persistently unfavorable perceptions and misconceptions about the field.

Nabi (2013) evaluated the relationship between the members of the public and the police in Bangladesh. The objective of the study was to explore the public relations perspectives in the legal sector of Bangladesh. A survey was carried out in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangamati, Noakhali, Comilla, and Kushtia. Police-public relations, service delivery, legislative framework, trends, and initiatives to enhance relations were all examined in this study. In the concepts and practices section, the author stated, Bangladesh's police force does not have a well-structured system for interacting with the people. The legal and organizational structure still requires a thorough evaluation and revision. The legal framework for police-community interactions is lacking in Bangladesh, and the

Police Act- 1861 does not address this issue. Police Regulations Bengal 1943 provides some guidance to police officers in police-community ties. Bangladesh's Criminal Procedure Code allows the public to help the police and magistrates in their investigations. The government's attitude has a significant role in these kinds of relationships.

#### *Public Relations in Organizing Activism*

A similar study analyzed and investigated the use of public relations methods and tactics in Bangladesh to organize activism against gender-based violence (GV) (Ali, 2017). Findings suggested that PR has developed as a weapon for dealing with systemic issues like inequality, marginalization, and GV in an environment where resources are limited. Campaigns, obtaining finances, and gaining public support for action were all facilitated by these NGOs' activists, who devised and deployed a variety of PR strategies.

These NGOs' public relations efforts and actions seemed to alter public perceptions about GV, women's rights, and the plight of its victims while also assisting in the passage of new legislation aimed at preventing and halting the disease. The study aimed to conceptualize and theories a PR strategy that takes activists' perspectives and PR practices into account by answering research questions. To combat the misconceptions that perpetuate GV and encourage community action, their PR efforts and methods are strategic, dialogic, informational, discursive, and resistant.

Another study examined the functions of Public Relations (PR) in attaining various communication goals (Bhati, 2012). According to the findings, non-profit organizations place a high priority on communicating with their beneficiaries. The NGO sector would rely heavily on public relations as a for-profit entity. NGOs must constantly interact with their internal and external audiences to remain viable in an ever-evolving world. Because of the industry's inherent funding challenges, public relations may be a tremendous asset in helping these organizations connect with their target audiences at the grassroots level. Another study found that Bangladeshi media relies heavily on government sources (Biswas & Talukder, 2023). Many elements in the PR toolbox provide a personal touch to build trust and faith while making it possible for non-profits to reach large audiences at a reasonable cost.

#### *Social Media and Organizational Public Relations*

The intersection of social media and organizational public relations has become an increasingly prominent area of study in recent years. Researchers have sought to explore how social media platforms can be effectively utilized by organizations to enhance their public relations efforts. Haigh et al. (2013) conducted research to undertake a comprehensive examination of the content demonstrated on Facebook pages affiliated with profit-driven entities. The study suggested that engaging with Facebook pages has a positive impact on stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's relationship, corporate social responsibility, and purchase intent.

A similar study was conducted by Waters et al. (2009) to ascertain the utilization of Facebook by nonprofit organizations, a content analysis method was carried out on the Facebook pages of 275 legally incorporated nonprofit organizations, which were randomly selected for analysis. This study has revealed that a significant proportion of these organizations have yet to integrate most available Facebook applications into their social networking endeavors. The findings indicate that among the three strategies (disclosure, interaction and networking), disclosure emerged as the most frequently utilized approach.

### **Communication Scholars and Public Relations Practitioners**

Habib and Sudhanshu (2012) in their research tried to deconstruct the unfavorable conceptions of public relations by analyzing the viewpoints of Bangladeshi communication professors and public relations practitioners. Bangladeshi society has shown a growing interest in public relations, while it had previously gotten little attention. Respondents agreed that social, economic, and cultural changes in Bangladesh throughout the 1990s were responsible for a boom in the field of public relations during the previous two decades. For the most part, participants felt that public relations are an ethical and honorable career with tremendous societal significance. They believed, it gave a management and spokesman role that bridges the divide between the public and the governing elite, not only in media relations. Public relations professionals should adhere to an ethical code that encourages openness and responsibility in the industry. Some responders in Bangladesh have suggested that public relations practitioners adhere to the Canadian Public Relations Association (CPRA). It may be commonplace to hear unfavorable comments about the profession from co-workers or anybody else since it is still in its infancy in contemporary culture (Habib et al., 2012). Chinese companies utilize six distinct types of formal public relations strategies, namely visitation, philanthropy, participation, publicity, party involvement, and political propaganda. These strategies serve as essential tools for these companies to establish and maintain favorable relationships with various stakeholders, including the public, government entities, and political parties. By employing these diverse approaches, Chinese companies aim to enhance their reputation, foster positive public perception, and effectively communicate their organizational objectives. The four-step process involves the strategic coordination and implementation of public relations activities that possess considerable economic, social, and political implications. The investigation conducted by He and Tian (2015) examined the differentiating factors among firms that possessed varying ownership structures. This study aims to offer a comprehensive examination of public relations practices in China, with a specific focus on elucidating the variations observed and the strategies employed in public relational engagement. Despite being a relatively recent development, there is a notable absence of comprehensive research about the patterns and practices of Public Relations across diverse organizations. The existing body of literature has identified a knowledge gap, which has

been addressed by the current study. Through the literature review, this study has gained insights into the fundamental patterns and practices of public relations, thereby providing valuable information for making enhancements in this field (He et al., 2015).

The literature highlights the dearth of comprehensive research conducted on public relations strategies in different organizational contexts, particularly in the case of Bangladesh. The lack of knowledge in this area is the main reason why the current study is doing a thorough examination of public relations patterns and practices. Setting precise research objectives ensures that the study's goal and scope of examination are aligned. The stated objectives of this framework specify the specific areas of study that will be addressed, such as examining social media interactions, analyzing communication techniques, and studying the involvement of public relations representatives in decision-making processes.

The pursuit of research endeavors is guided by the establishment of specific objectives. The present study is being conducted with specific aims and objectives in mind. The primary aims of this research encompass:

1. To explore the means that are used to communicate in public relations in several moments.
2. To examine the audience engagement and interaction through social media in public relations.
3. To explore the participation of public relations officials in the decision-making process.

The researcher emphasized the following research questions to find out the pattern measurement, the main reasons, and the benefits of this research.

**RQ1.** What are the means of communication in public relations in several moments (usual, strategic, crisis)?

**RQ2.** How is the social media interaction carried out?

**RQ3.** How do public relations officials influence organizational decision-making?

### **Hypothesis**

An evident relationship is observed between organizations and giving posts on their social media page.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study has been conducted through a mixed-method approach. This study has conducted a qualitative analysis in the explanatory sequential mixed method. A quantitative content analysis method, as outlined by Berelson (1952), has been employed in this paper (Bengtsson, 2016). Key Informant Interviews were conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire to collect qualitative data. The interviews were analyzed thematically. Employing convenience sampling this study investigated the social media pages of Khulna University, Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh Bank, and City Bank between 1 May – 31 October 2022. Elaborately, the social media pages of these organizations were integrated, well-organized, and updated. Consequently, it was easy to collect data from the social media pages of these organizations. The collected data were analyzed to examine what types of content they share on their social media pages. The collected data were finally analyzed in Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences (SPSS) followed by a case processing summary and a chi-square test.

**Results**

**Quantitative findings**

The case processing summary has compared the social media activity of different government and corporate

organizations in Bangladesh. A discernible correlation has been observed between the quantity of posts generated by companies on their respective social media platforms. The output of the crosstabs analysis contained the number of elements. As its name would imply, the Case Processing Summary is essentially a summary of the cases that were processed when the crosstabs analysis was run.

Table 1: Case processing summary chart

Case Processing Summary	Cases		Missing		Total	
	Valid					
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>Post * Organization</b>	571	100.0%	0	0.0%	571	100.0%

Here, N represented the number of cases in the sample. The case processing summary indicated there were 571 valid cases with a percentage of 100.0% with no missing data.

Table 2: Cross tabulation Chart of Organizations

Post * Organization Cross-tabulation		Organization		Total
		Govt	Private	
<b>Circular</b>	Count	50	15	65
	% within post	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
	% within organization	16.8%	5.5%	11.4%
<b>Press release</b>	Count	21	0	21
	% within post	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	7.1%	0.0%	3.7%
<b>Notice</b>	Count	75	26	101
	% within post	74.3%	25.7%	100.0%
	% within organization	25.3%	9.5%	17.7%
<b>Workshop</b>	Count	49	3	52
	% within post	94.2%	5.8%	100.0%
	% within organization	16.5%	1.1%	9.1%
<b>Inauguration</b>	Count	20	0	20
	% within post	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	6.7%	0.0%	3.5%
<b>Result of draw</b>	Count	2	0	2
	% within post	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	0.7%	0.0%	0.4%
<b>Job Circular</b>	Count	2	1	3
	% within post	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within organization	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%
<b>Greetings</b>	Count	30	33	63
	% within post	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
	% within organization	10.1%	12.0%	11.0%
<b>Offer</b>	Count	0	76	76
	% within post	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	0.0%	27.7%	13.3%
<b>Advertisement</b>	Count	0	63	63
	% within post	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	0.0%	23.0%	11.0%
<b>Information</b>	Count	2	39	41
	% within post	4.9%	95.1%	100.0%
	% within organization	0.7%	14.2%	7.2%
<b>Event-based</b>	Count	23	15	38
	% within post	60.5%	39.5%	100.0%
	% within organization	7.7%	5.5%	6.7%
<b>Seminar</b>	Count	13	1	14
	% within post	92.9%	7.1%	100.0%
	% within organization	4.4%	0.4%	2.5%
<b>Conference</b>	Count	10	2	12
	% within post	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within organization	3.4%	0.7%	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	Count	297	274	571
	% within post	52.0%	48.0%	100.0%
	% within organization	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The above crosstabulation table illustrates the distribution of circular-based social media posts between public and private organizations. Starting from the top the chart showed that 50 of 65 circular-based postings came from government entities and 15 from private ones. The percentages within post (represents the proportion of each organization's count, government or private, relative to the total number of posts for that specific category) demonstrated that circular-based postings were more prevalent on the social media pages of government institutions which were 76.9%, with just 23.1% of all circular-based posts coming from private organizations. Government organizations (16.8%) had more circular postings on their social media pages than private organizations (5.5%), but both types of organizations together had 11.4%. For press releases, the count of government and private is 21 and 0. The proportion of press release-based posts on social media pages of government organizations is 7.1%, on the other side private organizations are 0.0%. In terms of notice, the count of government and private organizations are 75 and 26 and percentages within organizations are 25.3% and 9.5% which concludes in total with 17.7%. Workshop-based posts on government social media pages were 16.5%, compared to 1.1% for private. The total is 9.1%. On social media, inauguration-related posts predominated. The chart indicates that twenty of twenty inauguration-based posts originated from government agencies and zero from private ones. While both categories had 3.5%, government organizations had 6.7% more inauguration based social media posts than private organizations. The result of the draw for the government was 2 and for the private was 0 where the percentage of the organization shows government organizations emphasize on inauguration-related posts where the private organizations lack significantly.

The job circular count was 2 and 1 and percentages within organizations were 0.7% and 0.4%. The greetings count for the government was 30 and for private it was 33 and here the percentages within the organization showed 10.1% for government and 12% for private organizations. The count of offers was 0 for the government whereas 76 for the private organizations. Here private organizations dominated in postings offer on their social media pages than government organizations (0.0%), but both types of organizations together had 13.3%. In the advertisement

category, private organizations posted 63 times, while government organizations made no posts. Private organizations had 23.0% more advertisement postings than government organizations, leading to a total of 11.0%. The information-based count on government media pages is 2 and on private pages 39 out of 41. Here private organizations had 14.2% more information postings on their social media pages than government organizations (0.7%), but both types of organizations together had 11.0%. The event base count for government and private organizations was 23 and 15. Here government organizations had 2.2% more postings on their social media pages than private organizations (5.5%), but both types of organizations together had 6.7%.

The count for the seminar was 13 and 1 for government and private organizations. Here the percentage within organization of Government sector is 4.4% and for private sector is 0.4%. The total percentage of both the sectors within the organizations is 2.5%. The count for conferences for government and private organizations was 10 and 2. Here, percentage within Government organizations was 3.4% and for private organizations it was 0.7%, resulting in a combined total of 2.1%. Here the entire total combines 571 social media posts of which 297 were from the government and 274 from corporate organizations. The percentage within the post showed 52.0% and 48.0% for government and private organizations respectively.

The information presented in Table-2 indicates that government organizations have a stronger presence in content categories such as circulars, notices, and inaugurations, whereas private organizations are more focused on promotional activities like greetings, offers, and advertisements. These findings emphasize the varied methods used by different industries on social media platforms to communicate with users, pointing out areas where improvement and strategic alignment with organizational goals may be made.

The results of two distinct chi-square tests—the Pearson test and the likelihood ratio test—are displayed in Table 3. Under the null hypothesis that there is no association between the categories (government and private organization), both tests compare the observed frequencies of categorical data to the anticipated frequencies of the data.

Table 3: Chi-Square tests results

<i>Chi-Square Tests</i>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</b>	<b>Exact Sig (2-sided)</b>	<b>Exact Sig (1-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square	16.583 <sup>a</sup>	1	0.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	15.512	1	0.000		
Likelihood Ratio	17.449	1	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.000	0.000
N of Valid Cases	517				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 30.23  
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The Pearson chi-square test had a test statistic of 16.583 with 1 degree of freedom and an asymptotic significance value of 0.000. As a result, it was concluded that there was

a meaningful correlation between the compared categories (government and private) and sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

The likelihood ratio test statistic is 17.449 with 1 degree of freedom, yielding an asymptotic significance value of

0.000. This provided additional evidence against the null hypothesis that the categories had no association.

Table 4: Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.170	0.000
	Cramer's V	0.170	0.000
N of valid Cases		571	

A chi-square test for independence with  $\alpha= 0.5$  was used to assess whether the organization was related to giving posts on social media to their public relations activities. The chi-square test was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N=571) = 16.58, P < 0.001$  with a phi ( $\phi$ ) coefficient of 0.17, indicating a small to medium relationship between organizations.

The analysis contained a total of 571 valid cases, which represents the complete set of observations used in the test. Also, the information given in Table-3 showed that expected counts for 4 cells (14.3% of the whole) were less than 5, with the lowest expected count being 96. This meant that the results should be interpreted with care since low predicted counts can change how accurate and reliable the test was

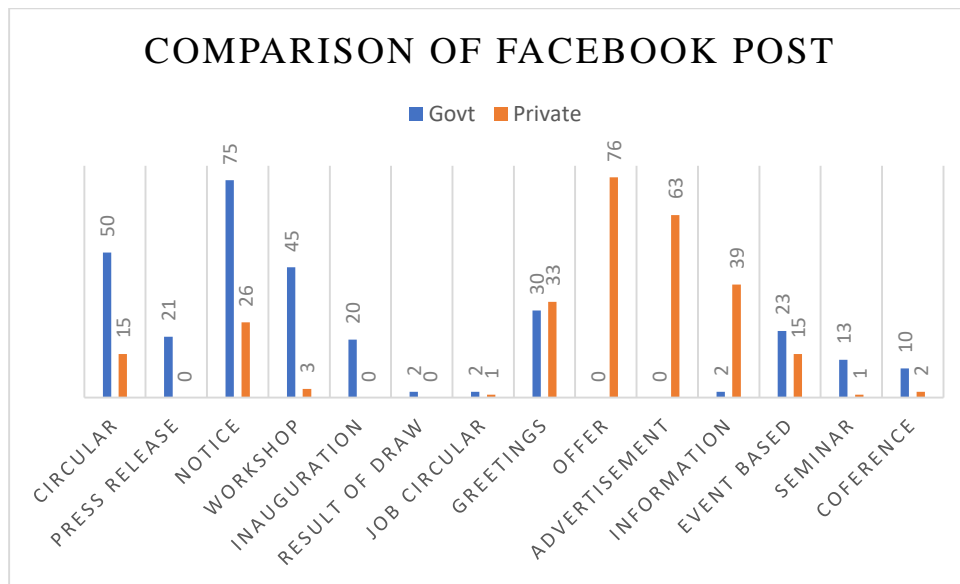


Figure 1. Comparison of Facebook posts between government and corporate organizations

An analysis of Facebook posts made by government and corporate organizations uncovers clear and identifiable patterns. Government entities are highly engaged in distributing official information and advertising events, primarily through circulars, notices, and workshops. Conversely, business entities prioritize promotional content such as greetings and commercials. The data provide evidence for the premise that there is a connection between corporations and their activity on social media, highlighting the diverse techniques used by various sectors.

**The Feedback Evaluation**

The study encompassed four distinct samples of public and private organizations, including Khulna University, Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, City Bank, and Bangladesh Bank. The data employed for this study was sourced from Facebook, encompassing the timeframe spanning from May to October 2022. In this study, data was collected from the aggregate number of

responses received on various social media platforms. These responses were utilized as a valuable source of audience and public feedback, while also serving as a means of communication between the organization and its stakeholders. The rationale behind the utilization of Facebook, a popular social media platform, by these organizations, stems from its effectiveness as a communication tool and its ability to facilitate the assessment of audience feedback.

The analysis of social media page of Khulna University shows did not interact with their audience and social media f. Out of 212 posts examined, none of the posts had any reply.

The histogram in Figure 2 represents the distribution of replies to social media posts from Northern University. The x-axis represents the number of replies per post, while the y-axis represents the frequency of occurrences for each number of replies. Each square box on the vertical axis

corresponds to a frequency of 2, while on the horizontal axis, it represents increments of replies

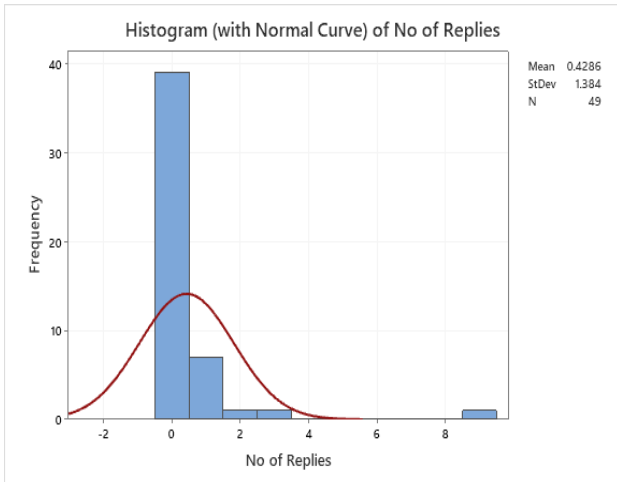


Figure 2. Histogram (with normal curve) of Number of Replies (Northern University)

The graph clearly shows that the majority of the posts received minimal interaction, with most posts falling into the 0-2 replies range, meaning very few comments were made on most posts. The highest frequency bar indicates that around 40 posts received close to 0 replies. However, a small number of posts achieved slightly higher engagement, but none went beyond 8 replies.

The data analysis reveals that Northern University’s social media posts generally lacked significant audience interaction. Out of 49 posts analyzed, most received fewer than 2 replies, confirming the limited engagement with their audience. No posts reached as many as 38 replies, contrary to the previous interpretation.

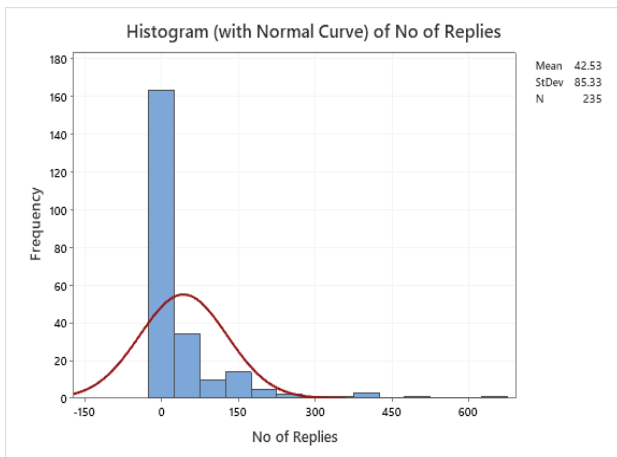


Figure 3. Histogram (with normal curve) of Number of Replies (City Bank)

The histogram in Figure 3 depicts the distribution of replies to social media posts from City Bank. The x-axis represents the number of replies, while the y-axis represents the frequency of posts. Each square box on the vertical axis corresponds to 20 replies, while on the horizontal axis, each square box represents 150 replies

The graph shows that a significant number of posts received limited engagement, with the majority of posts garnering between 0 and 50 replies, as seen in the highest

frequency bar around the 0-50 replies range. This suggests that most of City Bank’s social media posts did not attract much audience interaction. However, a few outliers exist, with some posts generating greater engagement, as shown by the smaller bars extending towards 300 replies and beyond. The maximum number of replies received by a post reached nearly 600 replies, though this level of engagement was rare.

**Social Media Interaction - Reaction, Comment, Share**

The contemporary landscape of communication has witnessed the emergence of social media as a formidable platform for extensive interaction and widespread public engagement. According to public relations professionals, the channel mentioned is widely regarded as one of the most reliable methods for effectively reaching the intended target audience. Audience engagement refers to the quantification of individuals’ interactions with social media profiles and associated content. The word encompasses a wide array of acts that occur across many social media. For instance, user engagement can be measured using several indicators, such as the number of likes and favorites received, the frequency of comments, direct messages, and replies, the extent of content sharing through shares and retweets, the frequency of saving content for future reference, the level of user interaction through clicks, and the frequency of mentions (Eckstein, 2022). These social media interactions indicate a significant pattern in public relations. The present investigation involved the examination of data extracted from the Facebook pages of relevant organizations within the time frame spanning from May 1st to October 31, 2022. According to the findings of the analysis, it has been observed that Khulna University has shared a total of 212 pieces of content on its official Facebook page. The cumulative data from the posts indicates a collective count of 58,947 reactions, accompanied by 2,403 comments, and a total of 1,389 shares. The verified Facebook page of Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna has published a total of 49 posts over the course of the May to October, 2022. The collected data indicates that the posts garnered a cumulative sum of 8,853 reactions, 330 comments, and 192 shares. During the span of six months, Bangladesh Bank actively engaged with its audience by sharing a total of 92 status updates on its official Facebook page. The data reveals that a cumulative count of 66,906 reactions, 2,567 comments, and 3,910 shares have been recorded. According to the available data, City Bank has shared a total of 232 status updates on their verified Facebook page. The data reveals that a cumulative count of 572,911 reactions, 31,395 comments, and 19,610 shares has been recorded. These findings show how effectively organizations are managing their social media pages and ensuring the involvement of their target audience.

**Qualitative findings**

The researcher conducted Key Informant Interviews (KII) with a semi-structured questionnaire to gather valuable insights regarding the various modes of communication employed in different scenarios, including routine situations, strategic moments, press release dissemination, public engagement, and the utilization of both traditional and new media platforms. The objective was to investigate

any potential shifts in communication practices or agenda-setting within the workplace, as well as to assess the influence of public relations officials on the decision-

making process. To address concerns regarding the protection of confidentiality, pseudonyms were employed to anonymize the identities of the informants.

Table 5: Pseudo names of Key informants

Name	Designation	Organization
Md. Malek Rahman	Director, Public Relations and Publications	A Public University of Bangladesh
Fozor Ali	Senior Administrative Officer Public Relations Department	A Private University of Bangladesh
Kallyan Sarkar	Head, Public Relations and Media	A Corporate Organization of Bangladesh

### **Means of Communication in Different Moments**

In the present discourse, the research endeavor sought to investigate how organizations engage in communication both within their internal structures and with external entities. During the course of the interview, the researcher gained insights into the communication methods employed by the organizations under study. These methods include the utilization of E-mail, WhatsApp, mobile phones, and Facebook pages, as well as traditional face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the utilization of communication via new media platforms was observed with notable frequency.

Md. Malek Rahman stated,

*“In the university, we mostly communicate as per demand. Sometimes it is face-to-face interaction or via mobile phone or WhatsApp according to the situation. With the media houses, we mostly communicate via phone and frequently pay visits to their places.”*

The interviewees placed significant emphasis on the utilization of new media as a means of communication. The significance of social media algorithms in evaluating public preferences and fostering a robust organizational bond has been underscored. Among various forms of communication, electronic mail, commonly known as e-mail, was widely regarded as the most secure and dependable method.

Kallyan Sarkar opined,

*“To provide the best service we have to have the best communication. We are everywhere, mobile, WhatsApp, Facebook, Email, and other social media. We are super active mostly in social media to reach the mass public and in providing feedback. We use email mostly in dealings and business agreements and major decisions in a crisis demand face-to-face board meetings.”*

### **Number of Press Releases Rolled out**

As mentioned in the interview, press releases serve as a crucial communication function. Press releases, which are written with experts in mind, guarantee coverage in a variety of media and foster involvement. In rolled-out news releases, a public University’s PR representative, Md. Malek Rahman claimed that the university was in first place among all of Bangladesh’s universities. According to him, a month’s worth of activities resulted in the release of close to 40–50 news releases.

The discussion indicated that the number of press releases issued by corporate organizations is less compared to the number of government ones. The private PR consultants said they rolled 9–12 press releases per month and depending on the events it changed from month to month.

Fozor Ali conversed,

*“We emphasize face-to-face interaction with the media houses mostly and provide the essential press releases. In each month number varies between 10-16 and in a yearly count we provide 170-180 press releases.”*

### **Public Engagement and the Reliable Media-Traditional and New Media**

As discussed by the interviewees, along with the traditional versions (print and electronic), numerous new media have emerged in modern society, including online portals, Facebook, YouTube, and many others. They mentioned public engagement as the PR function’s top priority. For public universities, the PR official said that they used both traditional and print media. The news published in print format is later updated on online versions. The ratio of engagement through Traditional media and new media for the public university was 60% for Traditional media and 40% for new media. The PR officer of a private University, Fozor Ali stated on this issue,

*“We tried to use both media equally. We focused more on traditional media for circulation and reliability but when it came to providing feedback and easy updates we went for the new media.”*

On the other side, the corporate organization was more focused on balancing the use of both media. But they were giving more priority to new media like social media pages.

Kallyan Sarkar pointed,

*“We are very active on the social media and have a verified social media page followed by more than 16 million people. We also are very active in providing replies in every single appearance. Our offers and notices get a wide number of shares through this social site.”*

### **Motive Shifting or Agenda Shifting in Public Relations**

The interview pondered agenda or motive shifting as a tool debatably and unethically used in Public Relations. Talking to the PR officers of Universities they demanded, that in their entire career, they had never used agenda

shifting to mitigate any issue. As per the discussion suggested, students' betterment was their top priority.

Md Malek Rahman stated,

*"In the university, we never try to shift any motive or agenda without resolving it. The university administration and student affairs are always headed to bring out things in favor of students."*

The PR representative of the corporate organization stated that this information was highly confidential and against his organization's policy to disclose.

Md. Kallyan Sarkar explained,

*"People may view certain decisions as unfavorable or motivated by ulterior motives, but the reality is that they serve for the betterment of the financial sector of the country."*

### **Participation of PR Officials in the Decision-Making process**

As elucidated by the respondents, the process of decision-making emerges as a paramount and arduous undertaking for any given organization, wherein the participation of influential personnel and top-ranking authorities assumes a pivotal role. Each PR representative interviewed responded identically to this query. As they discussed decisions with the public and media, PR personnel were said to have an active role in decision-making.

Md. Malek Rahman opined,

*"I have complete discretion to make decisions, and my suggestions are thoroughly evaluated. Throughout my entire career, I have never encountered difficulty in forming policies or taking action. The administration of the university has always been cooperative."*

The public relations officer of the private university remarked that his insights had been highly valued in his organization thus far, and mentioned in the context of his statement that, superiors are pleased with him.

Kallyan Sarkar said,

*"The calls are quite brief; tasks are quite difficult. The higher authority consults with us before making any final decisions and solicits input on several matters relating to news, media, and the general public. Our recommendation is highly regarded in every circumstance."*

### **Discussion**

The objective of this study is to ascertain the patterns and practices employed in the field of public relations. This study examines the communication patterns in traditional and new media, with a specific focus on social media. The research methodology involves analyzing social media pages and conducting key informant interviews to gain insights into the role of traditional media, communication patterns, and participation in the decision-making process. The prioritization of feedback evaluation and public interaction processes and responses has been observed during the assessment of social media pages.

Social media is currently regarded as an indispensable instrument for public engagement. Government and corporate PR operations are successfully utilizing this strategy. Here, the analysis incorporated 571 social media

posts taking 297 from government organizations and 274 from corporate organizations. The percentage within posts for government and private organizations is 52.0% and 48.0% respectively. A similar study (SI, 2015) found social media is currently one of the 'best available opportunities' to communicate with potential consumers. Community social networking websites enable social interaction. These new media gain the trust of customers by establishing a deeper connection with them.

A significant distinction is evident in the evaluation of feedback provision. This study reveals that government organizations do not provide adequate feedback on their social media platforms, which is a significant barrier to public engagement. Between the government organization Khulna University's response according to a frequency rate of 0 replies per square box on vertical axes in the figure indicates Khulna University's social media page did not provide any feedback to the users.

Whereas private organizations are emphasizing responding on their social media profiles. Northern University of Business and Technology, Khulna is prioritizing giving feedback. According to an analysis of their social media data, a frequency rate of 2 replies per square box on vertical axes in Figure 2, each square box represents 10 frequency comments on the horizontal axes. The graph indicates that majority of posts received interaction, with most of the posts falling into the 0-2 replies range on the horizontal axis. However, a number of posts did achieve higher engagement, reaching up to 38 replies. City Bank also excels in providing feedback. The findings reveal that a significant number of posts experienced moderate levels of engagement, with most posts registering between 0-2 replies as shown in Figure 2, and 0-50 replies for City Bank. Nonetheless, certain posts garnered notably greater engagement, reaching as many as 38 replies for Figure 2 and almost 450 replies for City Bank. City Bank demonstrated impressive results in delivering insights derived from social media analytics. A study (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017) found that frequent exposure to reader comments is associated with an increase in the perceived significance of both consumer and citizen orientations. In contrast, the perceived efficacy of web analytics as audience feedback is associated with an increase in the perceived significance of consumer orientation.

The analysis illustrates the extent of social media interaction. Public relations personnel are updating their information and content on new media (Facebook) in addition to traditional media, and Facebook is assisting them tremendously in reaching a larger audience and focusing on the intended ones. The number of interactions with the organization demonstrates the engagement tool's effectiveness. A similar study by (de Vries et al., 2012) stated social media platforms are excellent vehicles for fostering consumer relationships. Creating brand fan pages on social networking sites is one method to achieve this objective. Companies can post brand-related content (including videos, messages, surveys, and other content) on these brand fan pages. Customers can become fans of these brand fan pages and then like or remark on brand-related posts. This liking and remarking on brand posts indicates the popularity of brand posts.

Interviewees emphasized the significance of communication and its pattern in public relations. Throughout a period, public relations professionals employ various modes of communication. Face-to-face communication, telecommunication, e-mail, WhatsApp, Telegram, social media (messenger), Google Teams, and Zoom are used. As the situation dictates, public relations professionals utilize them to achieve effective results. A similar article (Newspatrolling, 2023) found that public relations play a crucial role in this dynamic industry, allowing businesses to shape their reputation, interact with their target audience, and navigate the ever-changing market conditions. Public relations are a strategic function that facilitates the effective communication of brand messages, product values, and product benefits to the intended audience.

Interviewees discussed rolling out of press releases as a fundamental element of public relations as it helps to get publicity and most importantly media coverage which helps the brand's reputation in the long run. According to the interviewees each of the organizations provides press releases regularly. A study (Broom & Sha, 2013) found the same and stated one of the primary responsibilities of public relations professionals is to discover or create positive news about the company, its products, and its employees. Getting the media to accept press releases and attend press conferences is the next stage, which requires marketing and interpersonal skills—putting the organization's news and information in the most favorable perspective.

All of the interviewees are public relations professionals employed by their respective companies. Explaining their participation in the decision-making process, each individual stated that their suggestions are carefully considered, they have complete autonomy at work, and they make substantial contributions. Osswald (2019) pointed out, that decisions can be viewed as a means of managing complexity. Thus, a communication-based, decision-based approach may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of public relations practice. Such an approach raises concerns regarding strategic public relations options and the participation of digital entities as 'decision-makers', among others. It further

connects the field of public relations research to schools of thought such as the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) and strategy as a practice by emphasizing decisions as communications. And PR professionals make strategies and decisions after considering the overall situation.

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

This study highlights the significance of social media as a prominent platform for public engagement in contemporary times. Consequently, it proposes that government organizations should prioritize and enhance their social media engagement efforts. The area in which they should focus on enhancing their work efficiency is the provision of feedback during the evaluation process. Simultaneously, it is observed that private organizations exhibit a limited frequency of disseminating press releases. These organizations need to enhance their proficiency in this field, as press releases play a pivotal role in garnering publicity, securing news coverage, and fostering positive media relations. The absence of a working manual and ethical guidelines within the public relations industry in Bangladesh has been identified as a significant gap. This research study strongly advocates for developing a comprehensive working manual and establishing ethical standards. Such measures are crucial for ensuring a streamlined workflow and mitigating the risks associated with excessive agenda shifting and framing.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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