

## **Analyze the Status of Public Relations of Sports and Youth Organization of Kohgiluyeh & Boyer Ahmad Province**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to analyze the public relations status of Sports and Youth Organization in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province. The present research was applied and study was a consecutive hybrid exploratory strategy and is implemented by qualitative content analysis and questionnaire quantitative survey. **Method:** Statistical society in qualitative section, ten people in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad provincial authority of sports and youth, and in quantitative personnel in public relations department and 46 provincial active board and sports reporters in the province in total there were 150 people. Data collection tool was a face-to-face interview and a researcher-made questionnaire. Based on the findings of the qualitative section, a questionnaire was designed and its face and content validity was evaluated by several experts in the field of public relations and sport management and its construct validity was done by confirmatory factor analysis and its reliability was Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0/94. **Results:** The qualitative data were analyzed by qualitative data encoding method and in quantitative part of descriptive statistics, frequency table was included and in the inferential part Friedman test was used. **Conclusions:** The results showed that the public relations status of Sports and Youth Organization in this province was below average, and Friedman's test showed that the importance, rank, and status of public relations were totally different.

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Sport management, Sports and Youth Organization

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the third millennium, the Iranian sports community and organization have become communication-oriented as they are on the verge of entering information society. A society where there are growing needs for information and communications because of the technological transitions, changes, and innovations so that human life improved from the era of mass production to the age of enhanced information and communications. In general, countries throughout the world are moving toward information and knowledge-based societies. As a result, It has affected all processes and activities of economic, cultural, industrial, political, and social relations (Mehrabpour, 2013). There is an increasing need for mutual understanding and recognition in the organization and offices to accelerate the management goals achievement. The content and nature of communications in any organization are based on how the communication intermediaries operate. These communication intermediaries, referred to as public relations, need to be prioritized and have an invaluable role in organizing and advancing the affairs of organizations. Public Relations is an institution that belongs to modern societies and has developed in the course of the emerging and developing organizations, which serves as a function of information dissemination, promotion, and Persuasion, seeking partnerships, convergence and optimization of affairs. The function of public relations in helping managerial decision making has been significant in any department, and organization. Converting public relations to a management tool for professional, scientific, and electronic, communicational activities is the new characteristic of public relations in the current century (Yahyaei, 2009). In simple terms, public relation in organizations is all the methods and ways of establishing, maintaining and sustaining communication with the general public to identify the organization and individuals within the organization. In this context, means of communication and the media are used to improve this communication (Sefidi, 2001).

Nowadays, sports organizations like non-sports organizations are exposed to environmental and global changes and are struggling with their issues. In this regard, Karimadis has reported that sports sectors encounter problems such as periods of decline, restrictive government laws, financial issues, and exposure to a competitive environment resulting from environmental changes (Mehrabpour, 2013). Therefore, it

can be said that public relations is one of the most important factors in the outcome of any organization and group, and this seems to be more essential for sports organizations, which has made sports public relations an integral part of sports organizations. Sports public relations is a communication-based management task that deals with identifying the critical audience of the organization assessing relationship with audiences, and improving optimal relationships between sports organizations and their audiences (Ghasemi, Keshkar, & Ghale, 2009).

Since sport as an overarching theme of community, interest is one the most important and essential factors for the health and vitality of the society, which also has an impact on the national productivity, it needs public relations, in which all management components are applied. It is, therefore, necessary that the General Authority for Sport and Youth, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Sport of the Islamic Republic of Iran, provide proper planning and a unified framework and conditions in which public relations managers and other institutions and organizations can take advantage of this strategy and meet communication needs in the society (Ali Abadi, 2012).

Hong and Ki (2007) in a study investigated Public relations employees' perceptions of their public relations. Those employees believed that consulting with top management of the organization, was their most crucial communication activity, also, obtaining credibility through honesty was the most important outcome of their activities. Also, they have considered direct communication with top management an effective communication strategy to achieve the goals. Sherwood, Nicholson, and Marjoribanks's (2018) findings also confirm that the Australian public relations workforce is approximately equally male and female. However, women were not equal in the other variables, and participants reported that their (negative) gender influenced their careers. This study shows that despite having an equal number of men in the traditional male-dominated arena, the field of women's work is still gender.

Besides, in Iranian society, public relations suffer from many problems because it is young, making it unable to be as real as it should be. More than 50 percent of public relations activities in Iran are elementary because they have no plans. That is, the work is done according to the instructions rather than a predetermined program

(Yahyaei, 2011) in a study, Findings of Alinia (2011) showed that public relations in Iran have a promotional approach. Instead of being an analyze public relations, public relations in Iran is a justifying and, to some extent, an explanatory one. The promotional attitude toward public relations has distorted thoughts. It seems that the general lack of natural talent and educational qualifications is one of the weaknesses of public relations in Iran. PR managers need to have a thorough knowledge of both communication and management science. In some organizations, Public relations managers can hardly communicate with the manager of the organization because of the harmful and inaccurate attitude of the organization's management towards public relations (Ajali, 2012).

In a study entitled "Investigating Public Relations Infrastructure of Ministries and Presidential Administration," Entezari Maleki (1999) states that 22 public relations have been investigated with significant problems, including organizational mismatch, Lack of attention to the sub-divisions of research, lack of planning and training without expertise and lack of experience of PR of the managers and officials, funding, facilities, equipment as well as lack of coordination between the PR department of ministries and the Presidential Administration. The Ehsani's research results (1999) shows that the Public Relations Association has been effective in promoting public relations only after the publication of Public Relations and holding scientific lectures, and has been the only non-governmental authority, though weak, in the field of public relations. The efforts of the association's stakeholders and their various proposals have led the government to issue several letters to improve the public relations situation in the country. Hashemi and Saleki (2018), in a study entitled "The Role and Position of Organizational Public Relations in Iran," state that due to Iran's lack of public relations science as well as its mere duplication of resources and ignoring native culture. Also, due to the absence of a government agency or corporation, it has led to organizational public relations in Iran being neither scientific nor practical. One may come across different definitions of public relations in any organization that perhaps none of which have nothing to do with scientific public relations.

Therefore, Sports and Youth Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province, which is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, has also played a significant role in improving the level

of sport and health, populist development, national prosperity and economic development of the country. It uses PR to promote its products and services. Also, given the limited studies on the importance of sport public relations in sports organizations, the purpose of the present study is to answer the following questions. What is the status of the planning of the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province? What is the state of human resources in the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Provincial Authority of Sports? What is the status of public relations of Sports and Youth Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province? What is the status of physical resources and administrative structure in Public Relations of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Provincial Authority of Sports and Youth? What is the state of affairs in public relations of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Provincial Authority of Sports and Youth? What is the ranking of public relations for the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Provincial Authority of Sport and Youth Affairs?

## **METHOD**

This study is a consecutive hybrid exploratory strategy and is implemented by qualitative content analysis and quantitative questionnaire survey. Also, the present research is in the range of applied research. Statistical society in qualitative section, ten people in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad provincial authority of sports and youth, in a non-randomized based on expert criterion in sport management and public relations, and in quantitative personnel in public Relations department and 46 provincial active board (Including chief, vice chairman and secretary of the board) and sports reporters in the province in total there were 150 people. The statistical sample in the qualitative and quantitative sections was selected as a whole (integer) because of limited community members. To achieve the objectives of the study, the qualitative content analysis method was first interviewed with 10 experts in the field of public relations and sport management with semi-structured questions, and game codes were extracted from the interview. These codes were then defined as axial codes and finally summarized as selective codes. In the quantitative survey method, a researcher-made questionnaire with qualitative section findings is constructed, which examined public relations performance based on five indicators (planning, human resources, financial resources, physical and

administrative resources, and executive activities). Although the questionnaire used was a researcher-made questionnaire, five experts approved its content validity in the field of public relations and sports management, and its construct validity was assessed by confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was studied in a pilot study with 30 subjects and was calculated and confirmed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94. For data analysis, in the qualitative part: the qualitative data encoding method in three steps of open, axial, and selective coding was employed; in the quantitative part, the descriptive statistics including the Frequency distribution table; in inferential part: Friedman test was analyzed using SPSS software.

## Findings

### Qualitative findings

**Table 1:** Qualitative part findings

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Ministerial programs; general administration programs; Ministry plans on different occasions are Sent; General Office programs sometimes are in line with the Ministry; The ministry programs are sometimes beyond our reach; Executive Tasks in Public Relations are divided into Three Administrative, Youth and Sports sections. The administrative department includes general manager meetings and other units; sports section includes Meetings in different boards as Competitions; Youth section includes cultural programs and youth Done by the Cultural Department; for development of the public sport, The role of public relations. It is very useful; for the development of sports, Public Relations promotes women athletes works;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General and strategic planning of the General Office</li> <li>- Operational planning and annual sports calendars</li> <li>- Developing a championship sport</li> <li>- Development of the public sport</li> <li>- Developing Women's Sports</li> <li>- Promoting the sport of veterans and the disabled</li> <li>- Development of cultural activities</li> </ul>	- Planning

<p>Lack of skilled workers in the past 25 years there has been no employment in the field of public relations, an insufficient attempt is made;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quantity of Human Resources (Number of Human Resources Required)</li> <li>- Quality of Human Resources (Quality of Force Human need)</li> <li>- Human Resource Productivity (Fit Activities with Existing Force)</li> </ul>	<p>- Human Resources</p>
<p>The necessary funding is not provided to the PR field; it must be financially requested first to get things done if Budget approval is available to public relations. No financial productivity; Lack of sponsors in public relations activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quantity of funds (Does the budget required Are they available?)</li> <li>- Attract sponsors for relationship activities</li> <li>- General Resolution of financial performance</li> <li>- Rights and benefits of public relations official</li> <li>- Productivity in financial resources (Relevance of activity to financial resource)</li> </ul>	<p>- Financial Resource</p>
<p>office equipment including telephone, computer, camera and dedicated room; due to lack of specialist staff the optimum use of equipment is not made; Ministry's attitude towards PR has changed for the last five years; Positive attitude from the manager, the deputies and the rest of the organization to public relations;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to office equipment, computer, internet, telephone, fax</li> <li>- Having office space in the room dedicated Public Relations</li> <li>- Having an organizational position in the administrative system</li> <li>- Physical resources and administrative efficiency (relevance of activity and physical resources office)</li> </ul>	<p>- Physical Resources and Administrative Structure</p>

<p>Up-to-date website of the general office; there are 46 active delegations in the province that interact well with public relations; news is available to the PR via social media; A group called Sports and Media is set up to keep the news up to date; The meetings are held with General manager who has been associated with media companions throughout the year; no public relations workshops were held for the delegations; public relations were communicated through the Provincial News Agency directly to the provincial capital's news director; Press and sports reporters; PR has a good relationship with athletes, clients and benefactors;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active and up-to-date official website of the General Office</li> <li>- Proper reflection of headquarters news and information on provincial radio</li> <li>- Proper reflection of headquarters news and information on the provincial landscape</li> <li>- A proper reflection of the news and information of the Bureau in the press</li> <li>- The proper reflection of general administration news and information on social media</li> <li>- Effective public relations with sports reporters</li> <li>- Coordinate with sports teams</li> <li>- Holding public relations workshops for the boards</li> <li>- Holding news meetings or conferences</li> <li>- Crisis management in the face of negative events and news</li> <li>- Improve inter-organizational communication (Optimize communication between employees in the general department)</li> <li>- Improve the relationship of the General Department with the client</li> <li>- Improve the relationship of the General Department with athletes</li> <li>- Improving the relationship between the general office and the benefactors</li> </ul>	<p>- Executive Activities</p>
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### Quantitative findings Descriptive statistics

**Table 2:** Frequency distribution of research indicators

Frequency Sum Indicators Questions	Very Good	Good	Mean	Poor	Too Poor	Average
Planning Question 1-7	71	147	284	211	246	2.56
Human Resources Question 8-10	19	46	141	97	108	2.44
Financial Resources Question 11-15	22	61	194	178	220	2.28
Official and Physical Question 16-19	72	121	168	114	73	3
Executive Activities Question 20-33	167	293	537	498	433	2.60

### Inferential statistics

**Table 3:** Friedman Test of Ranking

Ranking average	
3,04	<b>Planning</b>
2,68	<b>Human Resources</b>
2,18	<b>Financial Resources</b>
3,79	<b>Official and Physical Resources</b>
3,30	<b>Executive Activities</b>

**Table 4:** Independent Sample Test

Number	137
Chi-square	86,768
df	4
Asymp.sig.	0.001

## RESULTS

The findings of Table 2 show that the physical resources and administrative structure of the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is at a moderate level, as well as the planning, human resources, financial resources, and administrative

activities of the Public Relations Department. Also, the youth of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is below average.

Friedman test was used to rank public relations status. The Friedman test showed that the importance and rank of the public relations positions reported were different ( $p < /001$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $\text{chi-square} = 86.768$ ). A comparison of mean ratings showed that the highest average rating (3.79) was related to physical resources status and administrative structure. Following the physical resources and administrative structure status were executive activities (3.30), planning (3.04), human resources (2.68), and financial resources (2.18), respectively.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the present study was to analyze the status of the public relations of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province's Authority of Sport and Youth. The findings of the study showed that the state of planning in the Public Relations Sports and Youth Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is below average. The results of this study are in close agreement with the importance of planning in sports organizations with the findings of Javadipour (2015) and Firoozi, Razavi, and Farzan (2012). Given the lack of a strategic plan and a lack of clear policies and orientations, and a lack of mid-term, tactical, and operational plans, these are essential challenges for sports organizations. Implementing medium-term and tactical and operational plans in line with the broader goals avoid wasting human, physical and information resources while preventing any re-work. Whether program or policy is general or operational, or whether experimentation is scientific or not, it still requires proper implementation. Therefore, coordination and implementation of sports organizations with macro policies and proper planning and orientation are essential. Consequently, it is recommended to develop and implement a strategic plan in the provincial general authority and sports boards and sports departments of the province; to facilitate more in the province. Macro planning and implementation make the efforts of the sports community a unifying framework for achieving macro goals, reduce parallel activities, and align efforts to achieve goals. It also provides a measure to control the province's sports performance. Undoubtedly, the penetration of program-oriented thinking and strategy at lower levels, such as city sports departments and provincial athletic boards, facilitates the development process.

The results showed that the human resources situation in the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is below average. The results of the research were in line with the lack of human resources in public relations with the findings of Rezaian (2008) and Vahed (2009) as well as the results of the Executive Studies Ajali (2012) and Javadipour (2015). One of the weaknesses of public relations in our country seems to be a fault of skilled and qualified personnel, both quantitatively and qualitatively. There is a lack of human resources and researchers for studying the topics of interest and pathological issues of the organization. Public relations duties are not limited to customer service, leisure and staff planning, installation of a placard, congratulatory message and so on. As relationships become more sophisticated and complicated, media growth, audience expectations, and knowledge of public relations become more professional. But public relations in our country is a general lack of natural talent and educational qualifications because our education system is incapable of training public relations professionals and the importance of public relations in the organization does not emerge and is merely a job for a living. The issue of education in public relations is one of the fundamental problems in this field that, unfortunately, has been neglected in our country, which has led to many problems in this field. As a result, it is recommended to assist in the recruitment of talented staff or to provide an appropriate context for the development of staff thinking, as well as specialized public relations tasks and public relations brokers away from any imposition or consultation by political currents. The organization should not be injected and possess the expertise, experience, and management in the affairs of the organization, or incorporate political attitudes into the work and plans of the organization and move toward the goals of the organization.

The results show that the public relations status of Sports and Youth Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is below average. The findings of the study reinforce and confirm the lack of funding in public relations of sports organizations with the findings of Entezari Maleki (1999) and Ajali (2012) as well as Javadipour's research (2015). Organizations across all ages have faced a problem called resource constraints and their efforts have always been focused on achieving the maximum results with the least amount of tools and means.

Public relations also suffered from a lack of apparatus and a lack of credit for activities.

PR per se suffers many problems. Lack of funding and lack of sponsorship for public relations activities is one of the significant weaknesses of sports organizations, and many public relations experts agree that there are still many deficiencies in public relations. In the legal field, no significant progress has been made. Therefore, it is recommended to design an appropriate PR structure to address these shortcomings and to formalize the budget and funding needed to carry out the PR research in the new structure. The funding allocated to each department should be in line with the plans and needs of the department. The amount of funding allocated to the Authority for Sport and Youth is significant. Besides, developing non-governmental partnerships and reducing government tenure and attracting public sector investment support in sport is a top development priority.

The research findings showed that the status of physical resources and administrative structure in the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Ahmad Provincial Authority of Sport and Youth is at a moderate level. Research Results on the Importance of Physical Resources and Administrative Structure of Public Relations with Findings of Razmjouei (2013) and Mohammadi Baladzaei studies (2016) in this section are in line. Instead of being an analysis of public relations. Public relations in Iran is a justifying and, to some extent, an explanatory one. Public Relations in Iranian Governmental Organizations still functions far from its true philosophy in organizations and has failed to achieve its proper position in organizations and play its effective roles within and outside the organization. There are many opportunities for effective and ideal PR; the Internet is one of those opportunities. Unfortunately, in our country, public relations has not been very successful in using these technologies because of its worn-out structure. We indeed have a lack of modern facilities in the organizations. Still, it seems that the same old and limited features as the Internet, fax, statistical software, SMS, etc., are the most important reason why organizations exist. This is also a fundamental imbalance between the ever-advancing technology and the slow progress of public relations staff, not the optimal use. In this regard, it is recommended to establish communication platforms and, therefore, to raise awareness of public

relations among citizens is one of the effective areas in creating a positive attitude to public relations performance. By studying and researching challenges, we can identify problems and obstacles and review PR in performing its media and management tasks outside of the organization so that we can be aware of the constraints of organization, and present practical ways to improve the status and overcome transient problems.

The results of the study indicate that the status of executive activities in the Public Relations Department of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province is below average. The results are in close agreement with Mohammadi Baladzaei's studies (2016). Continuous review and recognition of the internal and external environment of an organization is an essential public relations task. The increasing development of mass media and the use of new information and communication technologies have made public relations success in the field of organizational activity that is research-oriented and analytical. The move from the industrial society to the information society and the essential phenomenon of globalization has provided the identification, acquisition, and processing of knowledge and information. The launch of IVR, web sites and databases, weblogs, e-journals, has had a significant impact on changing the functions and form and content of PR in the third millennium and can be successful in the field of information and communication. Timely detection can overcome the challenges, otherwise traditional and inefficient public relations organizations are doomed to failure. Public relations can be considered as one of the keys and dynamic units of the organization if it can perform its duties efficiently. Therefore, if organizational managers want to realize creative performance, it is advisable to employ highly skilled, expert, ethical, and public relations managers to communicate with audiences.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Research Findings concerning the rankings of public relations indicators in the study show that the highest average rating (79.3) is related to physical resources status and administrative structure. After the physical resource status and administrative structure, respectively, executive activities were (30.3), planning (04.3), human resources (68.2) and financial resources (18.2). The results of the research showed that the PR department performance is below average. It may be argued that it requires the use of expert public relations practitioners, specialists,

ethics, in communicating with audiences. Therefore, the Director of the General Office for Sport and Youth should select the people with the highest levels of public relations qualifications, eliminate public relations redundant tasks, and support the management of public relations in allocating funds and provide Short-term training for PR staff.

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