

Adoption and Impact of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations: A Study of Public Sector Universities in Sindh, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has already begun to alternative use for public relation professionals in public sector universities of Sindh, while interacting with the public, linkages with media communication agencies for good will of public and minimize the issues of institutions(Kawakami et al., 2024). This study has used a case study sample of public sector universities of Sindh government, including the Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur Mir's, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad, University of Sindh Jamshoro and Sindh madressatul islam Universit, Karachi to present the experiences, problems, and implications of the use of AI in PR. Its foundations include the model of The UTAUT (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology), Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory. Also, Semi-structured interviews with public relation officers and Media Managers had been used. This study is the part of the project's qualitative case study design. The five major finding are drawn from the data based on thematic analysis, which highlighted the operational efficiency use of AI in Media, monitoring and crisis management along with ethical consideration while use of AI for Press release and create content. It has been determined that using AI to enhance public relations offices capabilities, but it also requires significant reform, training workshops, and ethical consideration.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Public Relations Offices, Agenda Setting, Media framing and UTAUT model

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is controlling to various fields, including public relations (PR) departments of public sector universities of Sindh, as a result of the fastest advance technology of communication and data journalism. Through public relations write the press releases, publications, and content for the public

and universities, PR was historically involved in press release, maintaining good will of institutions, crisis management, and winning the public trust, specially in the public sector universities of country. However, the use of AI technology brought about both new potential paradigms and some insignificant altering the PR, reading transformation, and reception. (Muhammad Huzaifa Bin Salih, 2025)

Currently, the use of AI in Public relation offices are actively process, which cannot be highlighted as the futuristic scenario. As for as concern with the government's policies for use of AI had become effective and time saving solution, it engaged the officials, public and relevant users for better strategic communication. The real time analysts, AI Catboats and algorithm provide the automation press release and content for useful purpose of AI, it not only improving the work flow in communication, also it make it more responsive and evidence-based and efficient.(Chandio et al., 2024)

The use of AI for public relations has advanced significantly under the offices/ Media centers in Public sector universities of Sindh as well as Pakistan, it is resulted in formation of press release and content the available human resources have required little bit abilities for theoretical and practical work of universities. There is still more opportunities to learn about AI usage and its application in Public relations in the context of public sector universities of Sindh, Pakistan. Although public sector universities have been advance of digital transformation, such as the launch of the e-portal for admissions and HR, official social media accounts, the systematic application of AI in PR tasks is still relatively new. AI technologies are used in public sector universities of Sindh for communication with many government departments, officials, journalists and public. (Kawakami et al., 2024)

Moreover, the significant of upgrading public sector universities PR departments in Sindh cannot overstated. With the population of more than 240 million number in Pakistan, consists of young, child, adults and aged people, their number is going to increase day by day, due to excessive use of internet communication between the office PR for updated information and its constituents is becoming more common use in public sector universities. In the age of digital/social media, fake news (misinformation and disinformation) becomes common factor in name of PR departments for information updates. AI has the potential to solve these issues through factcheck but also enhance the capabilities of PR departments for useful use for public and institutions.(Kopalle et al., 2022)

The recent and potential use of AI in public relations offices in the context of public sector universities in Sindh, Pakistan, ironically, highlighting how they used the AI applications for various purposes in their offices. This study shows about the adoption process, goal, and impact of AI with the useful for Press release and content creation. Furthermore, this study also looks at future policy consequences, ethics, societal reaction, and universities concerns.(A.Shaji George et al., 2023)

The nature and working style of public relations (PR) offices are rapidly evolving in the global context, due to use of AI. The AI technologies are becoming a more important component of enterprises' communication strategies, including those in the public sector universities, through automating the creation of press release, content and official documentations, it is enhancing Media person's capabilities, profiling and interaction with journalists and Public. Various scholars from all around the globe observed that the usage of AI, ChatGPT, chatbots, sentiment analysis tools, and predictive analytics, among other things, is changing how public relations tasks are carried out.(Rizomyliotis et al., 2022)

These AI applications make PR efforts easier and more effective responsive by enabling the real-time media monitoring, audience targeting, and play the vital role in crisis communication strategies. Furthermore, the advance use of AI-based content creation (via programs like ChatGPT and DeepSeek) has led to new arena of technologies. PR departments of public sector universities can now produce press releases, auto-message, and design the effective campaign content more rapidly because they can create

content more faster than they could in the past as traditional way. This raises concerns about the accuracy, uniqueness, and ethics of such AI-generated content in addition to productivity gains.(A.Shaji George et al., 2023)

AI is seeking traction in many advance and growing countries, especially in public sector universities communication. In the same way, the government's universities of more advance countries like Canada and the UK have automated the delivery of e-services, in term of admissions, exams, and office use as well, also media and PR services and monitoring with AI tools.(Van Noordt & Misuraca, 2022)

In addition, data revealed the advance privacy system based on algorithms and ethical e-communication practices, such as the public sector where trusted, equity, and accountability of communications are very crucial. The characterization about the use of AI in public sector universities as a way to improve transparency and efficiency in all mean.(Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022)

AI is not yet fully incorporated into public relations offices of universities in Pakistan. The Digital innovations in the governance universities, such as e-portals and citizen feedback apps, have previously been created, but the use of AI in public sector universities PR-related tasks is still relatively new. The Pakistan's first National Artificial Intelligence Policy draft, which was created in 2025 for telecommunication, especially AI's potential in a number of domains but pays little attention to its communication aspects.(Yessenbek et al., 2025)

Provincial governments experimented with AI usage after COVID-19 chatbots, ChatGPT and deep seek were de3signed after the pandemic, but these projects proved to largely be reactive, donor-funded and not institutionalized yet. Majority of PR offices in public sector universities are continued to perform the most necessary communication processes in the form of public relations by press release, AI TV Studios and social media accounts that are controlled manually till date.

This paper aims to close the gap in the literature by examining the immediate use of AI in the field of public relations in the context of a few selected government departments, as well as discussing its potential and drawbacks in the given socio-political and governmental domain of Pakistan. This is despite the growing importance of AI worldwide, as there is a lack of systematic researches and strategies of the national character but related to AI and public relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Patterns of AI Adoption in Public Relations

Public relations (PR) worldwide is experiencing a significant shift as artificial intelligence (AI) becomes part of everyday communication practice. Tools such as chatbots, predictive analytics, and automated content systems are no longer experimental add-ons but increasingly central to how organizations manage their interactions with the public (Wright & Hinson, 2019). These technologies allow PR departments to track media coverage in real time, tailor messages for different audiences, and react more quickly during crises.

Governments have also begun relying on AI to strengthen citizen engagement. Chatbots and digital feedback platforms make information more accessible, yet scholars warn that too much automation can undermine the authenticity of communication—long considered a key to building trust. This tension echoes the Excellence Theory of PR, which emphasizes the importance of two-way, balanced communication between institutions and their stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

Generative AI systems such as ChatGPT now make it possible to produce campaign material and press releases at scale, raising both opportunities and concerns. While efficiency and productivity are clear benefits, issues of originality, ethics, and content credibility remain unresolved (DiStaso, 2023). International cases illustrate these trends: Singapore's Ask Jamie virtual assistant has streamlined communication across multiple agencies (Tan & Wang, 2020), while Canada and the UK have used AI systems for health information and media monitoring. According to the OECD (2021), such projects can improve transparency and service delivery, but they also highlight persistent risks around data privacy and algorithmic bias. To address these concerns, Floridi et al. (2018) proposed the AI4People Ethical Framework, which emphasizes values such as fairness, accountability, and transparency—principles that are especially important in the public communication domain.

Evidence from Southeast Asia underscores similar dynamics. In Indonesia, AI and big data tools have already automated functions such as media monitoring, release distribution, and social media management, with 45% of practitioners reporting job displacement in areas like news clippings and analysis (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). However, these disruptions are accompanied by the emergence of new competencies—particularly in social media management, influencer relations, and data-driven analytics—signaling a restructuring rather than elimination of PR roles.

In the Middle East, the uptake of AI in PR remains limited but growing. Research in Jordan and the UAE shows that universities and public institutions recognize AI's value in multilingual communication and audience targeting. However, the same studies reveal that fewer than one in five PR professionals had substantial knowledge of how to use these tools effectively (Al Olaimat et al., 2025). A complementary study of university PR departments reinforced this finding: while AI was considered important for improving audience targeting, cultural inclusivity, and multilingual communication, only 17% of practitioners possessed advanced knowledge of AI (Olaimat et al., 2025). The study further emphasized the potential of AI dialogue systems to enhance cross-cultural communication, but low technical expertise remains a key barrier. The picture is therefore mixed: enthusiasm exists, but weak technical expertise and limited institutional support continue to slow meaningful adoption.

PAKISTAN AND SINDH: EMERGING EVIDENCE

In Pakistan, AI adoption in PR remains at an embryonic stage. Although notable digital transformations have occurred through e-governance portals, citizen feedback applications, and digital dashboards, the systematic application of AI in PR functions has been limited. The National Artificial Intelligence Policy, drafted in 2023, outlines AI's potential across multiple domains but provides little substantive attention to communication functions (Ministry of IT & Telecommunication, 2023). Provincial governments such as Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced AI-powered dashboards and chatbots during the COVID-19 pandemic to track infections and engage citizens, yet these initiatives were largely donor-driven, reactive, and insufficiently institutionalized (Ahmed & Imran, 2022). Consequently, PR practices in many government offices continue to rely on traditional methods such as manually drafted press releases, television announcements, and conventionally managed social media accounts.

Recent evidence further reinforces these challenges. Nazir and Gul (2023) examined Pakistan's public sector and concluded that AI adoption remains slow due to bureaucratic rigidity, high costs, weak R&D, and limited ICT readiness, despite policy ambitions outlined in Vision 2025 and the Digital Pakistan Policy 2018. Similarly, a qualitative case study of government PR agencies—including the Federal Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and the Press Information Department—found that while AI is increasingly recognized as a tool for media monitoring and crisis response, adoption remains constrained by institutional inertia, technical deficits, and ethical anxieties surrounding transparency and privacy

(Huzaifa Bin Salih et al., 2025). Both studies emphasize the need for reformed governance structures, policy design, and targeted capacity building.

Research evidence from the higher education sector is also sparse but growing. A case study involving university libraries revealed that adoption is hampered by limited technological practices, resources, and concerns over data protection, using a blend of the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework and Technology Readiness Index (TRI) (Jan et al., 2024). Although not PR-specific, this signals institutional hesitancy toward AI integration in academic public services—a context closely analogous to PR offices. Moreover, in Pakistan’s broader higher education landscape, AI adoption in learning contexts has been studied through UTAUT-4 frameworks. Findings from Sindh universities show that variables such as contextual awareness, self-directed learning, personal innovativeness, and performance expectancy significantly influence AI uptake (Tago et al., 2024). While focused on learning rather than PR, this demonstrates the relevance of acceptance models in understanding institutional AI use.

In sum, literature from Pakistan indicates cautious exploration of AI across public institutions and higher education, with insufficient depth into PR functions, particularly in Sindh’s public sector universities.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Adoption of AI in Public Relations: Tools, Trends, and Barriers

Globally, AI’s PR toolkit includes automated content generation, sentiment analysis, real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and chatbots (Zahid & Mukhtar, 2024). These technologies hold promise for enhancing media engagement, speeding up press release production, and enabling strategic communication.

Adoption remains incipient in most contexts. Pakistan’s PR bureaucracy has increased awareness of AI, but practical implementation is limited due to institutional inertia (Huzaifa Bin Salih et al., 2025). University libraries in Pakistan display low AI readiness overall (Jan et al., 2024). Similarly, Sindh universities use AI infrequently, and mainly in pedagogical rather than PR areas (Tago et al., 2024).

Ill-defined policies and regulations, limited technical infrastructure, data privacy concerns, insufficient human capital, and cultural resistance (particularly in high uncertainty-avoidance contexts like Pakistan) are consistently cited as adoption barriers (Nazir & Gul, 2023; Zahid & Mukhtar, 2024; Huzaifa Bin Salih et al., 2025; Jan et al., 2024; Al Olaimat et al., 2025). Parallel findings from Middle Eastern universities show that while AI supports cultural inclusivity and multilingual communication, adoption is slowed by limited practitioner expertise, with only 17% of PR professionals reporting advanced knowledge (Olaimat et al., 2025).

Moreover, significant gaps in the literature remain underexplored. There is an almost complete absence of empirical research on the use of AI in public relations within Sindh’s public sector universities, despite these institutions being central to higher education and communication in the region. While theoretical perspectives such as Agenda-Setting Theory, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and Framing Theory have been applied in related fields, their systematic use in PR contexts is still limited. Stakeholder perspectives—such as those of students, faculty, administrators, or journalists—are rarely examined, leaving a partial understanding of how AI influences communication ecosystems. Finally, policy and ethical frameworks tailored to the unique socio-political and cultural environment of Pakistan’s higher education sector are virtually absent, underscoring the urgency for research that bridges global insights with local realities.

Research Questions

1. Which AI applications mostly used in public sector universities of Sindh for PR practices?
2. How effective these AI applications to achieve PR goals such as press release, content creation, consumer engagement, information dissemination, and crisis management communication?
3. What are the challenges and limitations faced by public relations offices in integrating AI into their communication strategies?
4. What do PR departments recommended to enhance the responsible and effective use of AI in public sector Universities in Sindh?

To get the answers of these questions, the researcher employs a qualitative methodology that includes document analysis and semi-structured interviews with public relation officers or Media Coordinators, and IT solutions team working within or in collaboration with Public relations departments.

Significant of Study

It is observed that this study will serve as a precursor to a more receptive, information-integrated with PR departments of public sector universities in Sindh for the use of artificial intelligence in current era. The implications of this study and what will be published will not only help to aware the academicians and PR departments about digitalization and AI communication strategies, but it also provided various practical guidance to PR departments, IT experts, and the media managers who are highly interested in digitalization the way they communicate to public, students, academia, press clubs and administration in the 4 major public sector universities of Sindh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative case study approach had been used to investigate that how artificial intelligence (AI) should be implemented in the public relations offices for campaign design. This research was capable to address the use of AI technologies, in addition to the challenges, perceptions, and efficacy of their usage. The study aimed to collect contextual and informative data on how AI is putting influence on the general universities public PR offices in the Sindh province.

An exploratory qualitative research design was adopted because there was not more empirical research on the usage of AI in public relations departments of four major public sector universities of Sindh. The descriptive data had been collected that how public relation offices behave, how their policies are set up, what kind of transparency inside the PR department used, and how to deal public, journalists and administration with the help of AI applications. The selection public relation offices of four major universities (University of Sindh Jamshoro, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur Mir's, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Nawabshah and Sindh Madressatul Islam, Karachi from Sindh province, because these are directly involved in the use of AI for communication with public, students, media persons and Administration, a purposive sampling technique has been used on the basis of primary criteria:

To select the public relation officers and Media managers, those who are directly involved in AI-based communication. The selection criteria were as follows:

This study had used two prime techniques for data collection:

Interviews had been conducted from four universities public relation office heads. Each interview lasted between 10 to 20 minutes, conducted either in person or via online platforms like Zoom or Google Meet (depending on participant availability and location).

The documents were analyzed to during the interviews, and relevant documents were reviewed/ asked, including: Official communication strategies, AI based reports, Press releases or media campaigns that mention or use AI-based strategies. The universities policies brief on e-portal and social sites of PR departments. Which helped to public, students and administration to integrate the data, verify information, and updated to masses within broader institutional growing trends.

Data Analysis, the available data was analyzed by using thematic analysis approach, to follow for the identification of required patterns, given themes, and relevantly.

The interviews process was involved:

1. Accustomedness with interview script and documentations
2. Coding to the data given using as hybrid approach: inductive (emerging themes) and deductive (predefined categories such as "AI tools used," "challenges," "benefits")
3. Categorized codes into broader term such as: Universities readiness, effective use of AI applications, secure to data and privacy, also Recommended new policies for ethical considerations.

This study set the high ethical standards throughout the research procedure:

- Get consent from PR department heads of the four major universities and conducted interview from all Media persons.
- Namelessness and confidentiality had been ensured by assigning pseudonyms and not linking responses to specific individuals unless publicly available data was used. The limitations of the Methodology Despite the ability to go deeper and put the situation in context with the qualitative approach, there are some limitations associated with the study, That the sample size was small and may not be totally generalizable across all PR departments of public sector universities of Sindh Pakistan. However, the article gives a rich, contextual idea of the subject that is also severely under-researched in Sindh, Pakistan.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Theoretical Framework has been used to investigate the integration among use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and public relations offices of public sector universities in Sindh Pakistan. This paper draws the attention on three basic theories from the field of Media and Communication: Agenda-Setting Theory, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and Media Framing Theory. These theories provide the comprehensive framework and approach to discuss how PR departments use AI technologies not just for information, awareness and update to the public, students and administration but also to create mutual understanding and show the positive image of universities and make the public opinion, construct the positive narratives and develop in the advance technological image of universities. Agenda-Setting Theory researched by: Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw in (1972), which reveal that Media do not dominate what people should think, but what to think. By following this into PR per rectum was applied, particularly the use of AI application had enclosed to minimize the gap with real-time monitoring, content dissemination and social media integrity, the theory can be applied assumption that PR departments of public sector universities are utilized AI to prevent what should be addressed with more powerful focus and over view as official expression, and to sift what the majority in find most interesting. Usage in this paper: It shape an agenda of universities to use AI applications to monitor Media houses and social Media plate forms can correlate trending topics with pushing press releases, tweets, and media campaigns.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003) is a comprehensive model designed to explain user intentions to adopt and use technology. It

integrates elements from eight earlier technology acceptance models (including TAM, TRA, TPB, and others). UTAUT identifies four key determinants of technology adoption and usage behavior: The adoption of AI technologies in public relations offices of universities in Sindh can be effectively analyzed using UTAUT.

PR professionals will adopt AI-driven tools (such as automated content generation, chatbots, and analytics dashboards) if they perceive significant benefits such as faster response times, improved accuracy, and enhanced engagement with stakeholders. If AI systems are user-friendly and require minimal technical expertise, adoption rates will be higher, especially among staff with limited IT skills. University leadership and government bodies (such as the Higher Education Commission and Ministry of Information & Broadcasting) play a vital role in promoting AI adoption by setting policies and encouraging its use. Adequate infrastructure, internet connectivity, staff training, and technical support in Sindh's universities are critical to successful AI adoption. Urban universities may adopt AI earlier due to better facilities, while rural universities may lag due to infrastructural challenges

Media Framing Theory Developed by: Erving Goffman (1974); extended to media by Entman (1993) explains how information is selected, emphasized, and presented by media or institutions to influence the interpretation and understanding of events or issues. A frame refers to the central organizing idea or narrative that gives meaning to information. Framing works by highlighting certain aspects of reality while omitting others, thereby shaping how audiences perceive, evaluate, and respond to information. In the context of AI adoption in public relations offices of universities in Sindh, framing theory helps explain how the **introduction and use of AI tools** are presented and perceived within institutional and public communication.

Applications used in this study: Communication devices included the adoption of AI filtered to automatic creation of information, example: produce news headlines, summarize Press releases, or respond on social Media sites The frame design can be used for promoting the positiveness of universities, share policies and posted achievement/success to achieves their goals.

Table 1:

Theory	Focus	Role in Study
Agenda-Setting	Issue prioritization via communication strategy	Understand how AI helps to shape public opinion
The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)	Technology adoption behavior	Analyze the variation in AI use across government offices
Framing Theory	Content messaging and interpretation	Evaluate how AI affects the framing of public narratives

By using this joined combination of theoretical lens, the study explores about the adoption of AI tools toward a crucial evolution and describe that how AI generated content impact on the public opinion, also show the relationship among the Universities, the media houses, AI content creation and the public opinion in the digital age.

The thematic analysis in qualitative data had been collected through semi-structured interviews from four major public sector universities of Sindh province. By this analysis researchers had identified adoption AI application in PR offices and explore the key points related to the use and impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public relations (PR) practices in the universities of Sindh. Findings explore the four major themes:

Adoption of AI: The new awareness about AI applications adoption within the general universities of Sindh province, still actual adoption remains uneven. Four Major Most interviewers were showed familiar in the use of "chatGPT," "AI META, but "sentiment analysis," reveals that these AI applications were still in initial usage phases or used only at basic levels. Such as: Nevertheless, PR representatives from four major universities had reported an expansive mixture of barrier to the AI adaptation within PR and across the universities, instead of this, this adoption opportunity should perceive advantages and increased awareness reading use of AI in academia. Moreover, they express the concern about non-availability of technical support and trained persons within department.

Effective use of AI for content creation: The thematic analysis from Public Relations Offices (PROs) of four major public sector universities revealed that the effective usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for content creation, including press releases, news headlines, and official drafting. One of prominent theme that emerged was **efficiency and productivity**, as participants consistently highlighted that AI tools significantly reduce the time required for preparing press releases and official drafts. Many PROs acknowledged that tasks which previously consumed hours can now be completed within minutes, enabling them to handle multiple assignments simultaneously and improve overall workflow.

Another important theme was **quality and accuracy**, with respondents appreciating AI's ability to produce grammatically correct and structurally sound drafts. However, concerns were raised about AI's limited contextual understanding, particularly when dealing with culturally sensitive content or institution-specific terminology. This limitation often necessitates human oversight to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the final draft.

Poor IT infrastructure, support and traditional approach of higher authorities: Poor infrastructure in IT support particularly in the rural areas' universities. Everyone is well aware reading adoption of AI applications are being used by all over the country, it has potential to manage Social Media accounts automatically and respond to public well. They further expressed that for experience to adoption of it but they are not using it on a large scale yet. (One of Public relation Officer) has highlighted that they have experimented with chatbots using AI technology to respond on social Media sites, or auto-generated answers but these initiatives are not possible without donor-supported during this critical time of universities.

Improvement in the adoption of AI in academia: Improvements in Public relation departments of public sector universities is required to monitor and evaluate the performance AI application, which are frequently used in academia. By the support of AI-generated result of Performance and evaluation, such as sentiment tracking tools, social media managers could track trends, identify fake news and respond quickly to kill the fake news at the time of crisis. The universities updated news policies, and information reading various aspects, what people are discussing about some news polices and advancement should be measured and implemented being social Media analyst. The various number of the studies revealed that AI-based, automatic reports save the time and efforts more easily than the burden of manual work, it also supports in the decision-making during press briefings or during communication crisis management.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it was revealed that the adoption and impact of AI in public relation departments of general universities of Sindh explore the complex usage of AI. PR experts and Media managers highlighted that there is need of potential awareness about AI use in academia, particularly about the adoption of AI technology for Media related content. However, the advance adoption of AI remained hindered due to poor IT advancement and limited expertise to PR departments in universities. Furthermore, traditional mind set is prime resistance in the adoption of AI. Despite of these challenges, there is need to invest for

IT development at advance level to meet the challenges in universities of Sindh province. It is also revealed that the AI Literacy in academia is in at early stage, but there is significant scope for AI transformation within academia will lead towards the advancement and it will put positive impact on overall academic and PR strategic communication by the support and commitment of authorities, provincial and federal governments.

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