

**Arab American University**  
**Faculty of Graduate Studies**  
**Department of Administrative and Financial Sciences**  
**Ph.D. Program in Strategic Management**



**“Impact of Strategic Communication on Firms' Legitimacy and Reputation: The Moderating Role of Influencers and Celebrities.”**

**Awad Samir Awad Duaibes**

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**Dissertation Committee:**

**Prof. Dr. Hussam Al-Shammari**

**Dr. Ayman Alarmoty**

**Dr. John Lipinski**

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**Palestine, January /2026**

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## Dissertation Approval

### Impact of Strategic Communication on Firms' Legitimacy and Reputation: The Moderating Role of Influencers and Celebrities

Awad Samir Awad Duaibes

202020348

This dissertation was defended successfully on 14/01/2026, and approved by:

Dissertation Committee Members:

Name	Title	Signature
1. Dr. Hussam Al-Shammari	Main Supervisor	<i>Hussam Al Shammari</i>
2. Dr. Ayman Alarmoty	Members of Dissertation Committee	<i>Ayman Al Armoti</i>
3. Dr. John Lipinski	Members of Dissertation Committee	<i>John Lipinski</i>

Palestine, January/2026

## Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is substantially my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Arab American University or any other institution.

Student Name: Awad Samir Awad Duaibes

Student ID: 202020348

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several stylized, overlapping strokes that form a cursive-like name.

Date of Submitting the Final Version of the Dissertation: 1.2.2026

## **Dedication**

In the name of God.

To the soul of my late father, may God grant him peace. I pray he would be proud of this milestone.

To my mother, whose quiet strength and steadfast support shaped my path more than she knows.

To my dearest wife, Suhad, whose patience, encouragement, and belief in me carried this work through its most difficult moments.

To my children, Samir, Faris and Karmel whose presence reminds me of purpose and hope.

To my family, whose love and constancy have been an anchor throughout this journey.

To my homeland, Palestine, whose enduring spirit continues to inspire my work.

With gratitude and humility, I dedicate this dissertation to all of you.

Awad Samir Awad Duaibes

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Many thanks,

Awad Samir Awad Duaibes

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**Awad Samir Awad Duaibes**

**Prof. Dr. Hussam Al-Shammari**

**Dr. Ayman Alarmoty**

**Dr. John Lipinski**

## **Abstract**

**Background:** In fragile and politically unstable environments such as Palestine, organizations face significant challenges in establishing and maintaining legitimacy and a positive reputation among stakeholders. Frequent political disruptions, economic constraints, and institutional fragility create an environment where public trust is volatile and difficult to maintain. Strategic communication, encompassing deliberate message planning and public engagement, plays a critical role in navigating these challenges. This dissertation investigates how strategic communication efforts influence the perceived legitimacy and reputation of medium- and large-sized Palestinian companies.

**Methodology:** A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted using structured questionnaires administered in medium- and large-sized companies across Palestine, capturing data on organizational communication practices and stakeholder perceptions of legitimacy and reputation. The collected data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed model linking communication strategies to organizational legitimacy and reputation, and to examine the moderating influence of influencers and celebrities.

**Result:** The results reveal that key organizational communication strategies, namely narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness, significantly and positively affect organizational legitimacy and corporate reputation. Furthermore, the analysis confirms that the involvement of influencers and celebrities has a statistically significant positive moderating effect,

meaning that effective communication yields greater gains in legitimacy and reputation when supported by influencer engagement.

Practical Implications: These findings underscore the practical importance of deliberate strategic communication planning and influencer engagement for companies operating in fragile political and institutional settings. By leveraging compelling narratives, consistent and credible messaging, and timely responsiveness, organizations in contexts like Palestine can strengthen stakeholder trust and build enduring legitimacy and reputational capital even amid instability

Keywords: Strategic Communication, Legitimacy, Reputation, Influencers, Fragile Environments

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## List of Definitions of Abbreviations

No.	Abbreviations	Title
1.	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
2.	PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
3.	NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
4.	RO	Research Objectives
5.	RQ	Research Questions
6.	H	Hypotheses
7.	RBV	Resource-Based View
8.	ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
9.	CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
10.	PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
11.	ABP	Association of Banks
12.	PCMA	Palestinian Capital Market Authority
13.	PIPA	Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency
14.	PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
15.	WEF	World Economic Forum
16.	AAUP	Arab American University Palestine
17.	SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
18.	CR	Composite Reliability
19.	AVE	Average Variance Extracted
20.	HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
21.	VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
22.	$f^2$	Effect Size
23.	$R^2$	Coefficient of Determination
24.	$Q^2$	Predictive Relevance
25.	OCS	Organizational Communication Strategies
26.	LEG	Organizational Legitimacy
27.	REP	Reputation
28.	UIC	Use of Influencers and Celebrities
29.	NF	Narrative Framing
30.	AT	Audience Targeting

31.	MC	Message Consistency
32.	CT	Credibility and Trust
33.	RES	Responsiveness
34.	CL	Cognitive Legitimacy
35.	SOL	Sociopolitical Legitimacy
36.	PASA	Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance
37.	GRJ	Generalized Reputation Judgment
38.	POR	Perceived Organizational Reputation
39.	SMCI	Social Media and Communication on Reputation
40.	PR	Parasocial Relationship
41.	PIC	Perceived Influencer Credibility
42.	B	Path Coefficient
43.	SD	Standard Deviation
44.	A	Cronbach's Alpha

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the study by presenting its background, articulating the problem statement and the identified gap in the literature, and outlining the theoretical and practical significance of the research. It further details the research objectives and questions, explains the conceptual model and hypotheses, defines the key variables under investigation, and describes the study's geographic, thematic, and methodological scope and limitations. Together, these sections establish the foundation for examining how strategic communication shapes organizational legitimacy and reputation in fragile environments, with Palestine serving as the empirical context.

## **1.2 Background and Context**

In politically fragile environments, legitimacy is not something that is inherited; it must be earned, very often, on the watchlist of outside stakeholders. It is constructed, contested, and constantly in flux. Organizations can't depend on strong institutions, stable regulation, automatic trust (Suchman, 1995). They must create their credibility and manage it in real-time instead (Zerfass et al., 2018). In such cases, strategic communication will be much more than just a tool for messaging, but survival. What an organization says, how it frames its actions, and whether its signals remain consistent may matter as much, or more, than the actions themselves. This is particularly evident in Palestine, where organizations operate within a fragmented institutional landscape, persistent donor dependence, and ongoing political instability. The struggle for legitimacy and reputation in such a context is not a side concern; it is central to organizational viability.

For the purposes of this study, fragile environments are defined as settings where exposure to political, economic, or social risks intersects with insufficient institutional capacity to manage those risks, a definition aligned with global frameworks from the OECD (2022) and World Bank (2020). In these environments, legitimacy and reputation are not guaranteed outcomes of performance. They are communicatively constructed under constant negotiation.

It is not only that it is difficult to achieve legitimacy. It is that it must be actively managed in real time. In fragile settings, legitimacy is always worked out through the continuous negotiation between audiences, often with competing expectations. As

Suchman (1995) explains, legitimacy is the generalized perception that the actions of an organization are desirable or appropriate within a socially constructed system of norms, values, and beliefs. It requires alignment with shifting societal narratives and institutional cues, many of which are unstable or contested (Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017). It is not automatically conferred by performance alone. It requires alignment with shifting societal narratives and institutional cues, many of which are unstable or contested.

Strategic communication is increasingly recognized as a central capability for navigating unstable environments. As Zerfass et al. (2018) argue, communication is no longer a support function, it is a core driver of organizational relevance. Macnamara and Gregory (2018) expand on this by calling for evaluation models that measure how communication contributes to legitimacy, not just visibility.

In fragile settings, this perspective becomes even more critical. Public trust is volatile. Institutional boundaries are often blurred. Organizations are expected to demonstrate not only competence, but also resonance with the values, beliefs, and narratives of their communities and funders. Communication thus becomes both the arena and the instrument through which that resonance is constructed.

These dynamics are especially visible in the Palestinian context, where fragmented authority, chronic donor dependence, and weak formal institutions amplify the symbolic weight of communication. Organizations in Palestine must not only perform, they must signal alignment, intention, and belonging in a high-stakes, contested space.

Viewed through a strategic management lens, these dynamics position legitimacy, reputation, and communication capacity as intangible yet critical resources (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991) describes such resources as valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable criteria that legitimacy often meets in settings where formal mechanisms of evaluation are weak, and symbolic capital, understood as the perceived social and moral value attached to an organization's identity, messaging, and alignment with norms, carries disproportionate weight. Teece (2007), in outlining the concept of dynamic capabilities, emphasizes the importance of organizational agility in reconfiguring internal and external competencies in response to environmental change. In fragile environments, where legitimacy must be negotiated continuously, this adaptability is not only strategic but communicative. Strategic communication enables organizations to interpret shifting cues, realign narratives, and reposition themselves externally, making it a central vehicle for exercising dynamic capability.

Reputation is linked to legitimacy, but the two words are not identical. Reputation refers to external views of an organization's performance, reliability or value. Legitimacy refers, however, to social acceptability of the organization as such, its conformity to normative expectations. Rindova et al. (2005) define reputation as symbolic actions. They highlight the importance of being visible and recognizable. According to Fombrun and Shanley (1990), Reputation is not an automatic by-product of performance but is actively constructed through signaling. In delicate environments where both being known and being trusted are dangerous, the distinction matters. An organization may be visible without legitimacy or technically capable without in-depth reputation. Strategic communication positions itself as the connective tissue linking internal strategy to external perception that manages the tensions that exist between visibility, authenticity, and trust (Macnamara & Gregory, 2018).

Political constraints in places such as Palestine, where lapses in institutional legitimacy are almost the norm and formal authority is often split up, exacerbate this. Organizations are often judged on how they do things, in addition to what they do. For instance, local communities, international partners and political stakeholders have views on organizations. According to Zaharna (2010), who wrote about strategic communication in asymmetric environments, communication is not just transactional in these circumstances. It is relational, identity-based, and often symbolic. Messages carry weight beyond their content. They signal alignment, intention, and belonging. On top of that, the communication ecosystem itself has changed. Beyond formal channels and official spokespeople, influencers and public figures have emerged as symbolic intermediaries who validate, contest, or amplify organizational narratives. In fragile settings, where institutional trust is limited, these informal actors often carry greater resonance than official sources. Their perceived authenticity and proximity to communities make them especially potent as communicative resources (Freberg et al., 2011). Strategically, they can be viewed as part of an organization's adaptive capacity, external assets leveraged to navigate uncertainty and influence perceptions. As Enke and Borchers (2019) note, these figures shape legitimacy and reputation by reinforcing or reframing how organizational messages are received, particularly when traditional cues are absent or fragmented.

Fragile environments, as defined by leading global frameworks, are not solely characterized by conflict or poverty, but by a persistent lack of institutional capacity to manage risk, maintain public trust, and support effective governance. According to the

OECD (2022), fragility emerges where exposure to risk intersects with insufficient capacity, whether by states, systems, or communities, to prevent or absorb shocks. The World Bank (2020) adds that fragility is marked by the erosion of institutional legitimacy, deteriorating citizen-state relations, and the presence of deep structural constraints. In such contexts, the private sector operates within an unstable signaling environment, where formal institutions offer limited assurance and communicative legitimacy must be continuously constructed. These dynamics are particularly salient in Palestine, where fragmented authority, competing narratives, and institutional voids (Khanna & Palepu, 2010) create a high-stakes arena for organizational legitimacy and reputation to be earned rather than assumed (Suchman, 1995).

This thesis begins with the premise that legitimacy and reputation are not by-products of action in fragile environments. These are the outcomes of strategy, and strategy, in these instances, often means the same as communication.

### **1.3 Problem Statement and Research Gap**

Organizations operating in fragile or politically constrained contexts face a fundamental challenge. They must secure legitimacy and maintain a viable reputation in environments characterized by institutional weakness, public distrust, and fragmented authority. Legitimacy and reputation are not passive outcomes but strategic prerequisites for survival and influence. Legitimacy is defined as alignment with social norms and stakeholder expectations, and it must be actively constructed, negotiated, and sustained (Suchman, 1995). In fragile settings, this process becomes even more complex, as organizations navigate conflicting sources of validation across international actors, local communities, and ideological groups (Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017).

Reputation is conceptually distinct from legitimacy. It reflects stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's past actions and future trustworthiness (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Reputation is shaped not only by performance but also by symbolic actions and public signals (Rindova et al., 2005). These symbolic dimensions become particularly important when institutional performance indicators are weak or contested.

This raises a central problem: what communicative capacities are required to manage legitimacy and reputation under these conditions? Scholars have emphasized the role of strategic communication in helping organizations adapt and align. Zerfass et al. (2018) highlighted its strategic role, while Macnamara and Gregory (2018) framed it as a

dynamic capability enhancing organizational flexibility. Hallahan et al. (2007) define strategic communication as a goal-directed organizational process, extending beyond media relations to encompass stakeholder engagement and the construction of shared meaning in contested environments. However, much of this work remains grounded in stable, corporate, or democratic systems. There is limited understanding of how strategic communication operates as a dynamic capability in fragile or transitional environments (Teece, 2007). Furthermore, the broader perspective on intangible resources, such as trust and symbolic value, has been underexplored in fragile states, despite the foundational relevance outlined by Barney (1991).

The rise of informal communicative actors, particularly influencers and public figures, introduces additional complexities. Influencers act as symbolic intermediaries who amplify, contest, or reshape organizational narratives (Enke & Borchers, 2019). When they convey authenticity, they may hold greater credibility than formal institutions, particularly in contexts where institutional trust is eroded (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Audiences often perceive influencers as relatable, credible, and trustworthy (Freberg et al., 2011). These dynamics create asymmetries of trust, where the messenger's perceived authenticity can outweigh institutional authority. In fragile governance systems, communication often relies more on networks and symbolic exchanges than on formal institutional authority (Zaharna, 2010), making credibility a constantly shifting asset.

Despite these observations, several gaps persist in the literature. Strategic communication is often treated as a tactical tool focused on media relations or branding, rather than as a dynamic organizational capability shaping decision-making and direction (Zerfass et al., 2018). Legitimacy and reputation are frequently examined in separate theoretical streams, with limited integration across the two (Suchman, 1995; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Some studies highlight the symbolic role of influencers, but not many have focused on how they co-produce legitimacy and reputation together with organizations in politically constrained settings (Enke & Borchers, 2019).

The Palestinian context exemplifies these challenges. According to Khanna and Palepu (2010), organizations in Palestine function under conditions of political fragmentation, institutional weakness, and pressure from international donors. The OECD (2022) views fragility as the intersection of risk and low capacity of institutions while the World Bank (2020) notes the deterioration of the legitimacy of the state and constricting of institutional capacity. Analysis of *ithy.com* (2025) shows that Palestinian firms are

adopting intangible assets such as credibility and reputation to distinguish themselves in the market amid lack of regulatory or competitive advantage.

Empirical approaches also remain limited. Despite qualitative work has looked at legitimacy narratives, quantitative work on communication as a latent organizational capability in fragile settings has been rare (Macnamara & Gregory 2018). Moreover, only limited research has examined actual impact on legitimacy, reputation and how strategic communication works as a multi-dimensional construct in conditions of political constraint. We will longitudinally construct a communication-based framework using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to fill in these voids. This part of the research tests the strategic communication capabilities, influencers' moderating role, and legitimacy and reputation parallel outcome. Thus, it makes a theoretical as well as empirical contribution.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

To understand the importance of the study, we have to look at its theories as well as its practice. The research fills important voids in the literature and has implications for organizations that work in politically constrained environments. This section outlines both dimensions.

##### **Theoretical Significance**

This paper attempts to close a long-standing gap between strategic communication and strategic management. Although both fields have studied the role of legitimacy and reputation, they do this mostly in parallel, not in conversation. Scholarly works and frameworks have focused on communication aspects of message framing, engagement and symbolic positioning (Zerfass et al., 2018), whereas management literature has focused on capabilities, performance and institutional strategy (Teece, 2007; Barney, 1991). The research brings together strategic communication, management, organization and the growing literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, showing that strategic communication must be seen as an intangible organization capability not just a tool or mechanism. This is particularly important in fragile contexts.

In fragile environments, legitimacy is not taken for granted; it must be actively constructed through ongoing social processes (Suchman, 1995). The research expands this insight by incorporating communication as a dynamic capability for organizations to

identify, interpret, and respond to legitimacy demands. More specifically, the study integrates the resource-based view (which emphasizes the significance of intangible resources such as credibility and trust, according to Barney, 1991) and the dynamic capabilities theory (which emphasizes how firms mobilize and adapt resources amid complexity, according to Teece, 2007).

The theory of strategic communication provides organizations with a framework that helps the organization to engage the stakeholders, create in local frames, and manage meanings in contested environments. This incorporation contributes to the theoretical discourse regarding the functioning of intangible resources – trust, credibility, and symbolic value – against a background of institutional voids. In addition, it contributes to the emerging debate on how informal communicative actors, including influencers, co-produce legitimacy and reputation with organizations (Enke and Borchers, 2019, Lou and Yuan, 2019). The study aims to contribute to a better theoretical understanding of communicative legitimacy in fragile systems, as well as organizational adaptation and strategic signaling.

### **Practical Significance**

The insights gathered from this study may be useful to organizational leaders, communication professionals, and policymakers working in fragile or politically constrained contexts. Organizations like firms and also NGOs work in conditions of political fragmentation and institutional volatility. Credibility, trust, and stakeholder alignment are challenges they face (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2020). The necessary study gives an empirical baseline to comprehend how organizations may manage changing legitimacy demands and reputation risks if organizational performance indicators remain weak or contested.

It also presents influencers and public figures as symbolic intermediaries of strategic value. Actors add credibility and help audience engagement (Freberg et al., 2011). At the same time, there are risks, like distortion of messages, inconsistency with the organizations' values, and quakes in public perception (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Knowledge of these dynamics will help the managers decide how to communicate and with whom.

The study may be placed in the Palestinian context but has a wider relevance. Organizations across the world often exist in fragile conditions marked by donor

dependence, public skepticism and fragmented authority. The results help to gain a broader perspective of how legitimacy and reputation are co-constructed communicatively in uncertain and institutionally challenged contexts; one that exists beyond the local.

## **1.5 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

The main objective of this research is to analyze the how organisations within politically constrained or fragile environments build legitimacy and reputation through communication. The concepts of legitimacy and reputation are well studied in organizational theory. But their interplay with communication strategies has received little attention, especially during crises and institutional fragmentation. This research study will undertake the challenge of developing a context-sensitive understanding of how organizations in under-institutionalized political environments build credibility and public trust, and how informal communicative actors, like influencers and personalities, may moderate these processes.

In achieving this aim, the study is guided by the following research objectives and aligned research questions.

### **1.5.1 Research Objectives**

- RO1:** To examine the communication strategies that organizations use to build and maintain legitimacy in fragile or contested environments.
- RO2:** To analyze how these communication strategies contribute to the formation, strengthening, or erosion of organizational reputation.
- RO3:** To investigate the role of influencers, public figures, and other informal communicators in moderating legitimacy and reputation-building efforts.
- RO4:** To assess how the dynamics of legitimacy and reputation construction vary across stakeholder groups and levels of communicative control.

### **1.5.2 Research Questions**

- RQ1:** What communication strategies do organizations use to build and maintain legitimacy in fragile or contested environments?
- RQ2:** How do this communication strategies contribute to the formation, strengthening, or erosion of organizational reputation?

- RQ3:** What role do influencers, public figures, and other informal communicators play in moderating legitimacy and reputation-building efforts?
- RQ4:** How do these dynamics vary across different stakeholder groups and levels of communicative control?

## **1.6 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

This study is grounded in a conceptual model that draws on the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007) to conceptualize strategic communication as an intangible organizational capability. Strategic communication enables firms to sense, interpret, and respond to stakeholder demands, particularly under conditions of political constraint and institutional fragility (Zerfass et al., 2018). In such environments, legitimacy and reputation are not inherited assets but dynamic outcomes, constructed through continuous communicative work (Suchman, 1995).

The main model identifies five core dimensions of strategic communication capability: narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness. The various dimensions allow organizations to align internal actors and project credibility to external stakeholders (Macnamara & Gregory, 2018). Aids for corporations to adjust communication activities to changing market and institutional circumstances (Zerfass et al., 2018).

A feature of the model is the arrangement of external communicative actors, particularly the influencers and celebrities as symbolic brokers. Digital actors have the potential to enhance organizational narratives and increase the trust of audiences (Enke & Borchers 2019). But they can also cause risks of misalignment and volatility (Lou & Yuan 2019). In weak contexts, where there is little institutional trust, these symbolic actors often have a disproportionate role in shaping perceptions (Freberg et al. 2011).

The figure below (Figure 1.1) visually summarizes the conceptual model, showing the hypothesized relationships between strategic communication capability, legitimacy, reputation, and the moderating role of informal communicators. This framework guides the formulation of hypotheses and the design of the empirical analysis in the subsequent chapters.

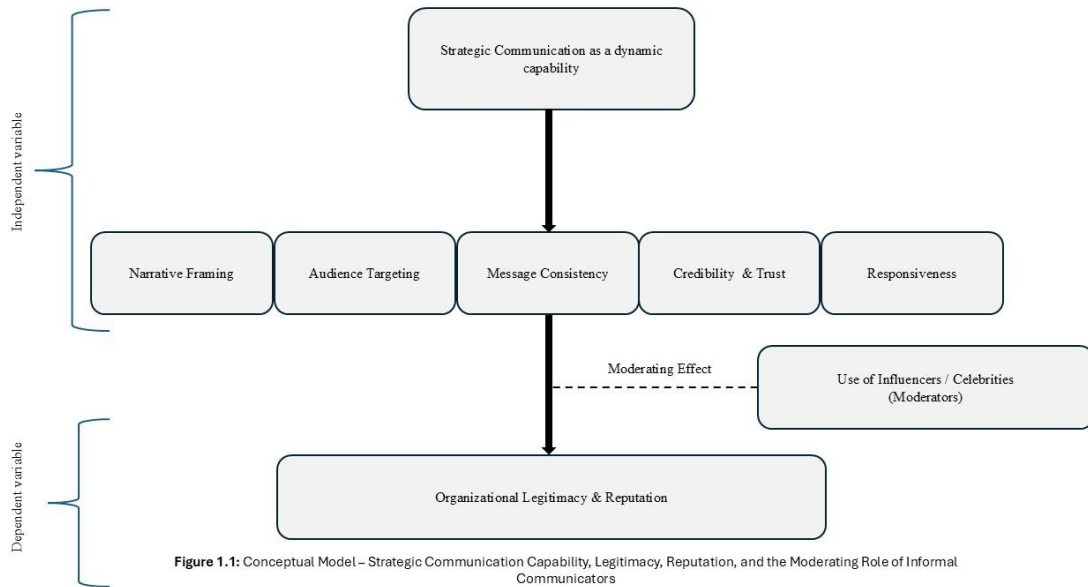


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Model

From the above concept, the present study proposed the following hypotheses to empirically assess the links between strategic communication, legitimacy and reputation.

### 1.7 Hypotheses

- H1:** There is a positive relationship between firms’ strategic communication capabilities and their perceived legitimacy.
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between firms’ strategic communication capabilities and their perceived reputation.
- H3:** The engagement of influencers and celebrities positively moderates the relationship between firms’ strategic communication capabilities and their perceived legitimacy.
- H4:** The engagement of influencers and celebrities positively moderates the relationship between firms’ strategic communication capabilities and their perceived reputation.

### 1.8 Definition of Study Variables

This study aims to investigate the relationship between strategic communication capabilities, legitimacy and reputation and how influencers and celebrities moderate

them. The research design will be grounded by clearly defining and measuring these key variables.

### **1.8.1 Strategic Communication Capabilities**

Strategic communication capabilities refer to the ever-adapting communicative practices that organizations adopt to align internal actors and engage with external stakeholders under volatile conditions. According to Zerfass et al. (2018), it takes on the role of monitoring stakeholder expectations, but also shaping the meaning that works across the clients / audiences. According to Macnamara and Gregory (2018), communication can be deployed by firms as a resource to enhance organizational coherence and flexibility. This construct will be operationalized along five dimensions: narrative framing, targeting of audiences, consistency of message, credibility and trust, and responsiveness. We will measure it using multi-item survey scales adapted from validated surveys, measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

### **1.8.2 Legitimacy**

Legitimacy is defined as the perception that an organization's actions are desirable, proper, or appropriate within a socially constructed system of norms and values (Suchman, 1995). Suddaby, Bitektine, and Haack (2017) expand this understanding, describing legitimacy as a dynamic and multi-level process that evolves over time, especially in transitional or fragile environments. This study will measure legitimacy through indicators capturing stakeholders' judgments about organizational alignment with prevailing social expectations and institutional norms.

### **1.8.3 Reputation**

Reputation refers to the collective evaluation of an organization's credibility, reliability, and past behavior by its stakeholders. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) emphasize the symbolic and perceptual nature of reputation, while Rindova et al. (2005) underscore the importance of both performance signals and public prominence in shaping stakeholder evaluations. Reputation will be assessed through survey items addressing perceived quality, trustworthiness, and overall standing.

### 1.8.4 Influencers and Celebrities (Moderator)

Influencers and celebrities are external communicative actors who amplify, endorse, or challenge organizational narratives. Enke and Borchers (2019) describe these actors as strategic intermediaries who shape audience interpretations, while Lou and Yuan (2019) highlight their perceived authenticity and trustworthiness as key drivers of influence. The moderating role will be examined by measuring how stakeholder perceptions of these figures affect the relationship between internal communication efforts and the outcomes of legitimacy and reputation.

Table 1.1 below provides a brief overview of the study's key variables, their main dimensions, and the measurement approach; detailed operationalization procedures and survey items are presented in Chapter 3.

Table 1.1: Overview of the study's key variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Measurement Approach</b>	<b>Key References</b>
<b>Strategic Communication Capabilities</b>	Narrative Framing, Audience Targeting, Message Consistency, Credibility & Trust, Responsiveness	Multi-item survey, 5-point Likert, adapted from validated scales	Teece (2007); Zerfass et al. (2018); Macnamara & Gregory (2018)
<b>Legitimacy</b>	Cognitive Legitimacy, Sociopolitical Legitimacy, Perceived Appropriateness & Social Acceptance	Multi-item survey, validated scales	Suchman (1995); Bitektine et al. (2020); Prado-Román et al. (2020)
<b>Reputation</b>	Generalized Reputation Judgment, Perceived Organizational Reputation, Reputation in Online/Social Media, Communication Influence on Reputation	Multi-item survey, validated scales	Fombrun & Shanley (1990); Rindova et al. (2005); Wang & Liu (2019)
<b>Moderating Variable: Influencers &amp; Celebrities</b>	Strategic Use, Alignment with Organizational Values, Perceived Credibility, Targeted Use	Multi-item survey, validated scales	Enke & Borchers (2019); Lou & Yuan (2019); Officer et al. (2022)

## **1.9 Study setting and limitations**

This research examines the functioning of strategic communication as a dynamic capability of firms in fragile political contexts. In particular, it looks at how communication practices help create organizational legitimacy and reputation in the context of institutional voids and stakeholder fragmentation. The research scope is outlined in terms of geographically, conceptually and methodologically, and is followed by a discussion of its analytical limitations.

### **1.9.1 Geographic and Contextual Scope**

This study empirically focuses on Palestinian firms located in an environment characterized by institutional fragmentation, regulatory ambiguity, and political instability. As Khanna and Palepu (2010) describe the emerging markets such as Palestine suffer not only economic backwardness, but also the absence of formal institutional arrangements in support of market activity. Filling such voids creates strategic challenges for organizations, who within the context of this article, must often rely on informal mechanisms, symbolic capital and their stakeholders' signaling, to establish their legitimacy.

In these settings, legitimacy is not a fixed trait, but rather a social negotiation that occurs between the audience and the setting in which it takes place. As previously noted, legitimacy refers to the socially constructed perception that a firm's actions align with societal norms and expectations (Suchman, 1995). In contexts where political constraints are present, this legitimacy necessarily has to be built and defended communicatively. This will mean that communicative strategies need to be planned carefully to resonate across fragmented environments of different stakeholders.

While similar to legitimacy in concept, reputation is not legitimacy. It shows the totality of view people have regarding a company's reliability, integrity and competence. As previously established, reputation is shaped not only by organizational performance but also by symbolic cues that influence public perception (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). In contexts of low institutional trust, such cues take on heightened importance. Rindova et al. (2005) further distinguish between prominence, being known, and perceived quality, being respected. This distinction is especially relevant in fragile settings where visibility does not automatically translate into credibility. Thus, prominence is the firm's being known while quality is the favorability of that knowledge. This twofold structure is

especially important in delicate circumstances where visibility and credibility do not necessarily match.

### **1.9.2 Thematic and Conceptual Scope**

This study examines the link between strategic communication and the two symbolic resources of legitimacy and reputation. They are thus studied as dynamic and interdependent outcomes of communicative capability rather than as fixed traits. Communication is a strategic resource that helps firms to deal with institutional complexity and stakeholder ambiguity. The resource-based view of Barney (1991) talks about intangible assets like reputation and legitimacy can be a source of sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable.

Teece (2007) takes this further, referring to dynamic capabilities as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to leverage rapidly changing environments. "Strategic Communication fits this definition in that it provides a capability with which to adapt to and align with instability in the institutional environment." According to Zerfass et al. (2018), communication is not just an extra function but a strategic process which helps in sense-making and shaping decisions in organizations.

The moderating role of external communicators (influencers and celebrities) in the relationship between the communication of firms and legitimacy and reputation outcomes is included in this paper. According to Enke and Borchers (2019), influencers can be thought of as symbolic amplifiers who add communicative capital to the organizations they help. In circumstances where institutional validation is lacking, these third parties can help form stakeholder perceptions.

### **1.9.3 Methodological Boundaries**

This research uses a quantitative design to explore the link between strategic communication capability and organizational legitimacy and reputation. Palestinian firms that were found to practice external communication were purposively sampled through the structured questionnaire. According to the authorized research proposal, the research population and sampling approach are aimed at medium and large firms that have a noticeable footprint in the Palestinian market.

The sample size using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula was adopted to ensure that there was sufficient data from the finite population. According to their table, for populations over 1,000, a sample size of 384 would yield a 95% confidence level with a population proportion of 0.5. To maintain the statistical power given the small target population size, this threshold was used.

The key analysis technique used is partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). It can help theory development particularly when the study conceives of latent variables and interaction effects. The current study, as will be later pointed out, involved the use of a relatively moderate sample size with complex interactions. So, as pointed out by Hair et al. (2021), PLS-SEM is appropriate for models with complex interactions involving a moderate sample size.

In order to reduce common method bias, several measures were undertaken during the construction and deployment of the survey. These included the anonymity of respondents, separation of the measurement of independent and dependent variables and randomization of items as possible. As noted by Podsakoff et al (2003), using two or more different sources of basic data to compile criterion variables prevents biases due to common method variance.

#### **1.9.4 Analytical and Generalization Limits**

Even though framework captures many theoretical concepts and awaits moderating variables, the analytical scope is limited. The research does not consider the performance, efficiency, or profitability of the firm. Instead, it focuses only on communication-related outcomes of reputation and legitimacy. Moreover, the results may be relevant to other fragile environments with comparable institutional voids. Their applicability is not, however, intended for contexts with stronger legal and regulatory infrastructure. As Khanna and Palepu (2010) warn, emerging markets are heterogeneous in their institutional configurations and cannot be treated as a single category.

While this study focuses on Palestine, the dynamics it explores, institutional fragmentation, public trust deficits, and symbolic competition, are not unique. Similar conditions are present in other fragile or transitional environments such as Lebanon, Iraq, or Sudan. These settings also feature hybrid legitimacy structures, contested governance, and reliance on communicative signaling. As such, the analytical framework proposed in

this thesis may be applicable to comparative studies in other fragile states, although contextual variation must be carefully considered.

The study's conceptual and methodological boundaries open several avenues for future research. First, while this thesis adopts a quantitative design, qualitative inquiry, such as interviews or discourse analysis, could provide deeper insight into the communicative practices and lived dynamics of legitimacy-building in fragile environments. Second, future research may explore the longitudinal development of legitimacy and reputation over time, particularly in response to crisis or shifting stakeholder alliances. Finally, comparative studies across fragile or post-conflict economies could test the transferability of the strategic communication model developed here, further refining its theoretical and practical relevance.

## **1.10 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Each subsequent chapter builds on the previous one. This then helps in developing and testing a strategic framework to understand how organizations build legitimacy and reputation through communication in fragile environments. The sequence takes the reader from theory to findings to strategy.

**1.10.1 Chapter One** opens the research by giving a problem statement, objectives and scope of the research. It also sets the research in context with the relevant literature and theories. Moreover, it offers the justification for the research design and its expected contribution.

**1.10.2 Chapter Two** offers a view of legitimacy, reputation, and strategic communication and the theoretical framework of the study. The analytical framework used in this research is designed incorporating the resource-based view, dynamic capabilities theory, and strategic communication scholarship.

**1.10.3 Chapter Three** explains the methodology used to conduct the study. It explains the research design, sampling approach, data collection methods, and analytical techniques, particularly the use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), as well as the procedures for ensuring validity and reliability.

**1.10.4 Chapter Four** presents the results of empirical analysis. It outlines the descriptive statistics, measurement model assessment, and structural model findings, with a focus on the relationships between strategic communication, legitimacy, reputation, and the moderating role of influencers.

**1.10.5 Chapter Five** discusses the findings in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. It interprets the results, draws out academic and practical implications, and reflects on the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and policy relevance, particularly for organizations operating in politically constrained or volatile environments.

Together, these chapters form a cohesive investigation into how communicative capabilities can serve as strategic assets in the pursuit of legitimacy and reputation under conditions of institutional fragility. The next chapter lays the theoretical foundation for this investigation, reviewing key concepts and integrating the three core frameworks, resource-based view, dynamic capabilities, and strategic communication, into a unified analytical model.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptual Foundation, Theory Building and Hypothesis Development**

### **2.1 Conceptual foundation**

#### **2.1.1 Strategic Communication as a Capability**

Strategic communication has evolved into a central organizational function that supports the achievement of long-term goals by shaping perceptions, managing meaning, and aligning internal and external messaging. Hallahan et al. (2007) define it as the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission. They emphasize the integration of various communication disciplines, such as public relations, marketing, and management, into a cohesive effort that supports strategic intent. This definition goes away from communicating for tactical purposes to communicating for achieving the organization's vision.

Communication, in the strategic management literature, is increasingly treated as a capability; a source of resilience and performance rental to organization. According to Barney (1991), the resource-based view (RBV), emphasizes the importance of intangible asset in competitive advantage. Strategic communication falls within this framework because it is a process through which organizations build trust, legitimacy, and stakeholder alignment. After its development and protection, it helps develop reliability in unpredictable circumstances. According to Men and Stacks (2013), businesses form their identity through internal communication which leads to credibility towards their stakeholders and the ability to manage complexities.

According to Fombrun and Shanley (1990), various communication activities make distinct contributions towards the image of organization in the market and society. Organizations brand their values and position themselves in broad institutional fields through signaling and meaning management. In this way, communication doesn't come as an accessory to strategy but rather an instrument through which reputational and symbolic capital is accrued.

This conception is especially useful in fragile settings, where institutional strong support is weak and formal rules are often contested. But it is worthy that organizations also face legitimate challenge with legitimacy in such contexts. According to Suchman (1995), legitimacy is constructed through communication, as organizations are required to justify their existence and actions to audiences. Organizational pressures lead to a

greater need for strategic communication due to increasingly fragmented norms, values, and political developments, to frame organizations' activities in a favorable light.

Beyond being a static capability, communication has also been framed as a dynamic capability, one that enables organizations to adapt, evolve, and respond to change. Teece (2007) defines dynamic capabilities as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure competencies in response to environmental shifts. Strategic communication contributes to this process by serving three critical functions. First, it allows organizations to sense developments in their external environment by monitoring narratives, media signals, and public sentiment. Second, it enables them to seize opportunities through timely and targeted framing of issues, decisions, or identities. Third, it supports reconfiguration by facilitating internal alignment and external repositioning.

Briant (2019) elaborates that strategic communication in high-stakes environments is a tool of institutional narration. It allows organizations to interpret disruption, manage uncertainty, and establish coherence amid competing demands. Opitz et al. (2018) note that communication processes facilitate strategic flexibility by allowing for rapid adaptation of narratives, roles, and frames in response to changing stakeholder expectations.

These capabilities are essential in politically constrained or fragile contexts. Groups have to constantly re-tune their messages to remain credible across fragmented constituencies. In such situations, communication promotes not just survival but influence. It helps organizations avert reputational risk, use vulnerability as a commitment, and signal consistency in volatility. The adaptive function centralizes strategic communication as essential to organizational learning, identity construction, and relational continuity.

The literature clearly shows strategic communication is a capability that operates in both stable and uncertain environments. It helps create and maintain symbolic and relational assets as well as adaptability and resilience. Strategic communication is a key conceptual building block after resource-based theory and dynamic capabilities for understanding how organizations get legitimacy, trust and stay strategically aligned in a complicated environment.

### 2.1.2 Legitimacy

Legitimacy is generally defined as the degree to which an activity is regarded as appropriate or acceptable by audiences concerned with it. As per Suchman (1995), legitimacy is a generalized belief or assumption that the activities of an entity are desirable within some socially constructed system. According to this fundamental perspective legitimacy is not something that the organization possesses, it is something that has been conferred to it. The nature of an organization, in this sense, is socially mediated and symbolically structured in a process involving unending interaction with the organization's environment.

According to Fombrun and Shanley (1990), an organization's legitimacy is considered a part of the latter's symbolic and reputational assets. Legitimacy occurs within the market of perceptions with stakeholders as the final arbiters while organizations compete for acceptance. To firms understand that language, actions, and identity must be aligned with something that is shared, strategic communication. When organizations don't act consistently with their brand, they lose credibility and can appear 'inauthentic'.

Suddaby, Bitektine, and Haack (2017) reinforces this view by conceptualizing legitimacy as an evaluative and contested process. They argue that legitimacy is a moving target, with observers' judgments using cognitive, normative and affective criteria to assess organizations. Stakeholders are assessed according to the evolving interpretation of information, changing contexts and social sensemaking. In other words, legitimacy does not reside in an organisation — it has to be created and maintained all the time.

According to this view, organizations work towards gaining legitimacy and are not passive to it. Rather, they apply legitimation strategies as an attempt to manipulate perceptions of them. According to Suddaby et al. 2017, organizations employ discursive means and visual symbols, along with structural alignments, to define what is appropriate and acceptable. It is really important to frame activities in a way that fits the dominant narrative to get stakeholders' approval. When organizations introduce new practices or operate outside the norm, it is especially important that they utilise or use these strategies.

It has been argued by Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara (2021) that legitimacy building requires a persuasive communication through which new knowledge, decisions or identities are legitimized by the organizations. In settings that are contested or fragile, rhetorical strategies become essential tools to justify decisions, handle controversies and

engender acceptance from skeptical or fragmented audiences. The work highlights how legitimacy is produced through language and other discursive practices and not pre-given as a result of structural fit or affiliation.

By stressing strategic communication, relevance is conceptualized or “constructed” as a symbolic, performative resource. Legitimacy is not something that is simply claimed, as Cornelissen et al. (2021) state, it is something that must be built through engagement with others. Organizations operating in a world of multiple and sometimes conflicting stakeholders are obliged to manage legitimacy expectations by emphasizing some frames and not others and by sending different messages to potentially conflicting audiences. The actions taken are not only informative but also strategic as they define how the organization is positioned in its institutional context.

Organizations operating at the micro level in institutionally void contexts should seek alternative mechanisms both for legitimacy as well as control. Alternative mechanisms include symbolic communication, coalition building, and public signaling, Peprah et al. (2024) suggest. Analysis reveals how legitimacy becomes a regulation stability substitute. The legitimacy allows an organization to mitigate uncertainty through social endorsement and perceived accountability.

According to Teece (2007), dynamic capability refers to the ability to maintain legitimacy in turbulent settings. Organizations need sensing mechanisms to sense changing stakeholder sentiments, seizing mechanisms to respond effectively, and reconfiguring mechanisms to reshape their identity and external narrative. Strategic communication allows the organization to adapt by providing feedback on how the organization is seen and needed use in continuous re-alibi.

This ability-based view considers legitimacy as an ongoing process rooted in organizational learning and not a one-time event. Firms operating in fragile or turbulent environment need to develop internal routines that enable them to anticipate external scrutiny and subsequently reposition themselves (Teece, 2007). This means looking at their messages, refreshing how they connect with important people, and heading off future problems between what they do and what people want or expect.

These views support the idea that legitimacy is not something that is set and predetermined. The social perception, rhetorical engagement and institutional context shapes public policy. For organizations that operate in fragile settings, legitimacy is not simply something that makes operations easier; it is a condition for survival. It has to be earned, signaled, and sustained through credible communication.

### 2.1.3 Reputation

Reputation is an assessment of the character, quality and performance of an organization. According to a stakeholders and observers interpretation based on past deeds, signals strategy, and marks on the public space. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) describe corporate reputation as the outcome of competitive signaling, where organizations seek to differentiate themselves by communicating favorable attributes to external audiences. They argue that reputation is not only influenced by actual performance but also shaped by institutional cues, media coverage, and stakeholder interpretations. In this sense, reputation becomes a symbolic resource that organizations actively manage to secure social standing and strategic advantage.

Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, and Sever (2005) further clarify the construct by identifying two core dimensions: being known and being perceived as good. The first refers to visibility, the extent to which stakeholders are aware of the organization. The second concerns the favorability of those perceptions, whether the organization is viewed as competent, ethical, or trustworthy. This distinction is important because high visibility does not always equate to a positive reputation. Organizations must therefore invest in not just awareness but in shaping the quality and meaning of that awareness through sustained communication efforts. The dual nature of reputation highlights its complexity and the need for deliberate management strategies.

Etter, Ravasi, and Colleoni (2019) build on this by analyzing how organizational reputation evolves in the digital environment. They argue that social media has transformed reputation from a relatively stable outcome into a dynamic, continuously negotiated process. In their view, reputation is co-constructed by organizations and stakeholders through a flow of interactions, interpretations, and reactions. This makes reputation inherently fluid, vulnerable to shifts in public sentiment, and susceptible to amplification or distortion. It also positions communication at the core of reputational management, requiring organizations to maintain a consistent narrative, monitor feedback in real time, and engage in dialogic processes that enhance trust.

In the public sector and fragile governance environments, reputation becomes more important because performance information is often ambiguous and credibility of institutions are under stress. According to Ayubayeva, Kussainova, Ibrayeva, Baimukhanov, and Kussainov (2025), the strategic reputation management is gradually becoming an increasingly important driver of innovation and reform in public

organizations. In such situations, reputation can be interpreted as a mirror to behavior and as a signal to capacity and intent. The research done by them suggests that public institutions are relying on narratives through communication to enhance legitimacy and stakeholder confidence when formal accountability channels are either limited or politicized.

Müller and Braun (2021) recognize that reputation has a strategic function in bureaucracies. The reputation is not just an asset—you don't just sit back and expect it to happen. Reputation is a resource where you actively influence it through the way we communicate. Government agencies are selective in disclosing information, framing messages and choosing stakeholders to manage social perception. This shows that communication is still central to reputational outcomes, even when the setting is highly regulated and hierarchical. Reputation management is not just about countering the negatives; it is also about building up the positives as per public perception.

Arhinful, Mensah, Amin, Obeng, and Gyamfi (2025) expanded the understanding of reputation by applying a signaling theory lens within the sustainable finance context. Organizations utilize reputational signals to communicate commitment, competence, and ethical standards, with the aim to influence trust and decision-making. In fragile or high-risk settings where formal guarantees are weak, trust ratings become more important. In other words, organizations must be clear about their values and intentions, consistent in behavior, and transparent in response to scrutiny. By doing this, they put a reputational buffer in place that can circumvent reputational damage and protect strategic relationships.

From these views, it is evident that reputation is more than the remains of the organization activity. It's an ever-changing viewpoint that we create through communication. A reputation is both a result of interactions with stakeholders and a resource for positioning the firm in the future. For organizations functioning in vulnerable and unstable areas, reputation offers a kind of capital that can generate access, trust, and influence, often when structural authority is lacking. As a result, managing reputation requires an integrated communication strategy that aligns narrative consistency, stakeholder engagement, and visibility to changing assumptions of the external environment.

While the study revolves around legitimacy and reputation, both are unrelated conceptually. While people often confuse the two terms for the same meaning, the two constructs have distinct theoretical origins, signaling mechanisms, and strategic

functions. This is particularly the case in fragile or contested environments. This distinction clarifies the analytical fine-tuning of the framework and helps ground the study's evidence base. The table below summarizes the main differences and their relevance in the strategic communication model created in this research.

Table 2.1: Conceptual Distinction Between Legitimacy and Reputation

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Legitimacy</b>	<b>Reputation</b>
<b>Theoretical Basis</b>	Institutional theory (Suchman, 1995); social judgment frameworks	Resource-Based View (RBV); signaling theory (Rindova et al., 2005)
<b>Core Question</b>	Is this actor appropriate or rightful within the system?	Is this actor competent, reliable, and valuable?
<b>Source of Evaluation</b>	Alignment with norms, values, and societal expectations	Stakeholder perceptions of performance, quality, and visibility
<b>Signaling Mechanisms</b>	Procedural fairness, moral narratives, symbolic inclusion	ESG disclosures, leadership signals, CSR alignment, symbolic performance
<b>Stability</b>	Highly context-dependent and vulnerable to contestation in fragile settings	More durable but still dynamic; shaped by visibility and external cues
<b>Function in Fragile States</b>	Enables institutional acceptance and stakeholder trust under constrained authority	Allows differentiation and access to resources where legitimacy is fragmented

- *Adapted from Fombrun & Shanley (1990); Rindova et al. (2005); Suddaby et al. (2017); Suchman (1995).*

#### 2.1.4 Influencers and Celebrities

Recently, literature has begun to deal with non-institutional communicators. Influencers and celebrities are certainly defining public perception, legitimacy, and reputation of the organizations. Actors exist outside of the formal authority structure but have symbolic and discursive power.

This emergence took off with the internet, especially as communication, media, and cultural businesses took off. Visibility, relatability, and symbolic capital generally trump institutional expertise or power. In fragile political environments, where people distrust formal institutions, such informal communicators can at least serve as narrative intermediaries, validators or disruptors.

An influencer is generally one who can influence individuals and a group of people to do something in their favour and act according to his or her will. This can be paraphrased as: According to Enke and Borchers (2019), influencers are actors who have become a part of and actively pursue their communication strategies in a structured setting. According to their framework, communication appears to be a purposive act and not an accidental one, as influencers take care of the audience segment they wish to speak to, the channel they want to use, the framing of their messages, and so on.

Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg (2011) state that the most important dimension of the public perception of influencers is credibility which include trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. This triadic structure helps explain why influencers, even without formal credentials, can be legitimate voices. People see employees as closer to everyday life than institutions or managers which makes them effective channel of organizations. The source of their influence is not formal authority but symbolic resonance and perceived conformity to audience values.

The difference between influencers and celebrities is subtle yet important. Though both groups consist of individuals who are famous, have huge followings, and are symbolic/visible (i.e., no longer just obscured or stuck in the background), celebrities are traditionally construed in terms of fame obtained offline. These individuals could belong to the entertainment, sports or public life (such as politicians or social workers) fields. Influencers and virtual celebrities are both considered brand endorsers (Cho, 2025). Notably, their value is not just about reach but is also about the strength of their parasocial relationships. These one-sided yet emotionally meaningful relationships create perceived intimacy, which in turn improves the way recipients receive messages and persuades them. Organizations partner with those individuals as a strategic move to transfer symbolic legitimacy and attention to their brand or cause.

Lou and Yuan (2019) reinforce this point by examining the role of content quality and perceived message credibility by influencers on consumer trust. People aren't fooled by influencer content. The audience assesses the content's coherence, value and if it aligns with the persona of the influencer. Accordingly, credibility is not a fixed condition; it is co-produced through repeated audience interactions and feedback. In situations where an organization's legitimacy is under scrutiny, credibility becomes a useful resource.

Using informal communicators is not just for marketing. Zaharna (2010) claims that they can support foreign policy goals by winning public support. She states how regimes and institutions increasingly rely on famous personalities, artists and celebrities

to smooth over the gap between formal policy messaging and public sentiment. In these situations, the figures do not just endorse messages, they localize, humanize and amplify those messages in ways that resonate with passionate audiences. In politically important spaces or ones full of media, official messages may not be believed or may get boring.

Holmqvist (2025) extends this symbolic use by investigating how royal figures are used to express cultural continuity and national identity. Although specific to the context, the insights can be transferred to organizational strategy: public figures are often used to suggest familiarity, stability, and symbolic reassurance when substantive authority is lacking. Firms, especially those in fragile conditions, may deliberately align with such figures for the illusion of continuity or public sympathy.

Brian (2019) considers how propaganda and counter-terrorism effort take advantage of symbolic authority and public personas. Her findings, while focused on state-level narratives, show how the perceived authenticity and emotional framing of informal communicators and the exposure to media contribute to their construction as credible actors. The same goes for corporate or civil society campaigns in contested spaces, which also seek to shape public opinion.

In the end, Men (2021) capture perspectives from inside organizations, observing how informal internal leaders, usually influential and not in a hierarchy, influence how employees think and act. This strengthens the point that influence is not only felt externally, it occurs internally, within institutions, causing communication authority to feel more ambiguous, more informal.

When looking at them together influencers and celebrities are not just a communication accessory. They are agents who, due to visibility, credibility and symbolic appeal, can enhance or complicate the legitimacy and reputation of organizations. In fragile or politically constrained environments, informal messages could have a greater emotional and cultural impact than formal messages. To create efficient, context-sensitive strategic communication, it's important to understand how these actors operate and how organizations relate with them.

## **2.2 Theory Building and Hypotheses**

Following the notions developed in previous section, this section devises the framework and develops a set of hypotheses. The five factors of strategic communication include narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, responsiveness, and

credibility and trust. In chapter 1, this was identified as the core dimensions of communicative capability. The literature discusses these elements as responsible for how organizations are perceived and how other parties are engaged (Hallahan et al., 2007; Macnamara & Gregory, 2018). Each of these will be examined in terms of organizational legitimacy and reputation. The section concludes with hypotheses that clarify the expected relationships, forming the basis for the empirical analysis.

### **2.2.1 Narrative Framing**

More and more organizations have begun using narrative framing as a strategy to broker stakeholder perception. Communication on ideals and values as well as accepted social conventions that encompasses all three forms of social communication; circular, linear and chaotic. Organizations can create preferred meanings of their actions with strategic narratives rather than simply provide neutral information. This puts organizations in line with society or moral expectations.

Framing is not just a style; it matters for how legitimacy is constructed socially. By controlling the terms on which public discussion takes place, and the symbolic associations attached to what an organization does, one can affect the way messages will be received and judged. (Briant, 2019) Within this sense, strategic communication is a kind of symbolic power; framing is a mechanism of that power. Organizations that can control their narratives have the power to steer attention, redefine controversies or even neutralize criticism by reframing themselves.

Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara (2021) further this view by relating narrative framing to the rhetorical strategies used in legitimation. The proponents of story-telling argue that stories are persuasive not just because of the content, but because of the logic of institutions. When organizations tell a story that fits in with the already established cultural templates, they increase their chances of being taken seriously. For instance, using the theme of innovation, resilience, or responsibility is not just a matter of content choice; it is a frame that connects the organization to widely accepted values. By framing the organization in a specific way, the organization feels like it “belongs” or “fits” within its context.

Elving, Grandia and Meeusen (2024) emphasize the importance of narrative alignment, which means that the narrative of an organization’s story needs to be coherent. When things don’t add up, suspicions arise that cause the loss of trust under turbulent

conditions. When narrative framing is coherent and repeated, it can create trust and credibility, and legitimize and enhance reputation. The cumulative impact of the above statements, the more calibrated and well-framed the narrative, the more shock-resilient the organization would become.

According to Macnamara and Gregory (2018), it is not just the message but the co-creation of meaning that makes communication impactful. They say the sender-receiver model should be rejected. The organizations should frame narratives that allow for various readings, debate, and feedback. This suggests that framing is not static but rather a shifting phenomenon. The frame ultimately stabilizes when it meets with the response of actors. Framing thus is an engagement tool, not just persuasion.

In this piece, Friel, Murtarelli, and Ottaviani (2024) explore stakeholder involvement in more detail. The work reveals that coherent narratives build emotional connections with stakeholders, especially when they provide a clear idea of the organization's role, goals, and values. Using storytelling in a relational strategy bridges information and identity. When stakeholders are aware of the 'why' of an organization, they are more likely to grant legitimacy to the organization and consider its reputation credible and stable.

The strategic use of framing also has direct implications for reputation. While legitimacy is rooted in social acceptance, reputation is shaped by perceptions of quality, consistency, and distinctiveness. As Zaharna (2010) highlights in the context of public diplomacy, narratives that lack framing coherence or that are misaligned with audience expectations often fail to generate trust. In contested settings, whether geopolitical or commercial, framing can determine whether an organization is seen as principled or manipulative. The effectiveness of reputation-building strategies often hinges on how well the organization frames its narrative in a way that feels both authentic and purposeful.

Macnamara (2023) also notes that narrative framing is a necessary condition for evaluating strategic communication success. Without an underlying frame, messages are received in fragments and lack evaluative clarity. Frame refers to Information that provides the context in which messages are understood. Framing both enhances the impact of the message and improves the retention by the audience. If organizations don't create a frame, they are leaving themselves open to narrative theft/reframing.

These findings point to the conclusion that narrative framing is no mere accessory to the act of communicating. It is central to both the construction of legitimacy and the

building of reputation. By framing information in a internally consistent, actor-shared and audience-sensitive manner, organizations “place” their information in a moral and strategic space that will influence how the public judges it. In fragile or contested settings, where trust in institutions is low and perception is volatile, it becomes even more important. Organizations express who they are, what they do and why it matters through their corporate communications (also known as important message).

*H1a: Narrative framing has a positive effect on organizational legitimacy.*

*H1b: Narrative framing has a positive effect on organizational reputation.*

### **2.2.2 Audience Targeting**

Audience targeting is an essential principle of communication strategy, which holds that organizations do not communicate into a void, but directly to groups that have different needs, values and expectations. Finding out, separating, and engaging with audiences nor ends with sending generic messages on the topic. You have to tailor them to suit their views. This is not just a technical operation. Rather it is a strategic operation that makes possible the construction of legitimacy and reputation across multiple publics.

Strategic communication must be audience-centered, said Hallahan et al. in 2007. Communication must be strategically aimed at ‘key stakeholders’ with messaging designed to appeal to the motivational, cognitive, and emotional frame concerns of these groups. Selecting an audience always involves conscious choices regarding who to speak to, what to say and how to say it. The chosen terms make an organization more or less responsive, relevant, and trustworthy. And these perceptions feed into legitimacy and reputation.

According to Zerfass et al. (2018), audience segmentation is crucial for effective communication that aligns with your goals. Their argument highlights that legitimacy is not given but negotiated by respective audiences. An organization can be considered legitimate by one group of people (like a company’s investors), but it can be considered illegitimate by another group (like a community) depending on its efforts. When communication mistakes are made in fragile environments, reputational impacts are amplified, especially when both the audience and narratives are polarized.

According to Macnamara and Gregory (2018), audiences are not completely passive but rather meaning-makers with characteristics and motives of their own. They also put forward a two-way model of strategic communication. They say creative people

should see beyond the numbers as it can hinder creativity and reduce quality output. Targeting refers to being precise but also about a dialogue, where message and meaning are mutually shaped. Organizations change their communication for different audience profiles to better create a shared understanding, that enhances legitimacy.

According to Friel, Murtarelli, and Ottaviani (2024), targeted communication enhances stakeholder engagement, especially when stakeholders feel that the message resonates with their reality. It suggests that this connection builds up emotional and cognitive ties to the organization, thus providing a better ground for legitimacy and reputation. When people see themselves in the message, they view the organization as real and aligned with them.

Men (2021) gives an inside perspective on how leaders shape their communications to ensure that employees are the audience. According to her, internal legitimacy is a prerequisite for external legitimacy and whether employees feel seen and acknowledged as distinct audience segments really matters. Targeted communication, therefore, works not only externally but also internally at the organizational ecosystem.

On the other hand, Enke and Borchers (2019) add a crucial digital aspect to this discussion. Audience targeting in social media environments allows for micro-segmentation and real-time adaption of messaging. This creates chances to influence people, but it can also be risky. On the other hand, it fragmentation may cause inconsistency. Still, the findings confirms that strategies tailored to your audiences are necessary to cultivate credibility and relevance in complex communication.

The study by Abualqumboz, Javed, and Ma (2025) shows how audience targeting works under crisis conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that organizational messaging that is strategic and designed to address the fears, needs, and information gaps of a specific stakeholder group can better preserve organizational trust and legitimacy. In crisis situations, audience targeting does not merely give a strategic advantage but also a reputational necessity.

In different contexts, Zaharna (2010) tells us targets must fit in a cultural context and symbolically relevant situation. Organizations that work within fragile or politically charged context cannot assume uniformity. They need to look for cultural cues, political sensitivities, symbolic frames that structure audience interpretation. The ability to attune at this level often determines where legitimacy is perceived and reputation is damaged.

According to Peprah, Sarpong-Kumankoma and Adomako (2024), organizations in situationally voided environments use targeted communication to build pockets of

legitimacy. The African e-commerce firm's case study demonstrates that strategically targeting audiences was key to success in an environment with weak regulatory and media institutions. In such a context, legitimacy and reputation are earned audience by audience—not ordained by larger systems.

The available studies show that audience targeting is not only about delivering messages, but also about constructing audiences. Companies create social space for negotiating reputation and legitimacy through segmentation, adaptation, and symbolic sensitivity. Not targeting may make you look either irrelevant or out of touch. People who target smartly can demonstrate credibility, build trust and form strong stakeholder relations in complicated environments.

*H2a: Audience targeting has a positive effect on organizational legitimacy.*

*H2b: Audience targeting has a positive effect on organizational reputation.*

### **2.2.3 Message Consistency**

Message consistency is the extent to which an organization conveys unified, coherent, and stable messages through channels, over time, and with stakeholders. Strategic communication goes beyond calling for consistency; it isn't just about repeating the same message but making it meaningful or plausible to stakeholders. Consistency also isn't about conforming to what's expected but the alignment between what the organization says, what it does, and what stakeholders expect. Accordingly, it conveys credibility, coordination and reliability, all essential elements underpinning perceptions of legitimacy and reputation.

Hallahan et al. (2007) outline a set of strategic communication principles that include message consistency, as inconsistent messages create confusion and distrust and counter strategic objectives. When stakeholders have a common narrative, they can interpret the organization's identity and intentions. When communication is misleading or contradictory (in an uncertain or fragile environment), stakeholders may call the actor's competence or sincerity into question, undermining legitimacy.

According to Zerfass et al. (2018), consistency must be ensured, not only between media channels but also between internal and external communications. By aligning both internal and external processes, it strengthens internal credibility and external positioning. An internal message said the same thing, reinforcing culture; an external message framing the organization in the public eye of key publics. Mechanical alignment suggests being

coordinated or in agreement. In the Short Messaging indicates others collusion, fixed position in a state of uncertainty going towards Canada.

The concept of “narrative alignment” is proposed by Elving, Grandia, and Meeusen (2024) who argue that it is a mechanism through which consistency in communication is realized. Stakeholders are perceived not just by the messages of which they speak, but by the message the collective is sending. The study’s findings suggest that narratives create trust by enabling predictability and reducing interpretive ambiguity. This trust will enhance legitimacy of the organization and contributes to long-term reputation.

According to Macnamara and Gregory (2018), consistency can be considered with an understanding of value in communication. According to them, strategic communication is not merely clarity, but coherence. One message builds off of the last one to make meaning. In an environment contested by two (or more) conflicting actors where information lacks validity and tit for tat damage occurs continuously, the cumulative process is essential to building credibility. When something is consistent it could symbolize stability.

Weller and Lock (2025) mention that the challenge of consistency is not easy with automated communication and decentralized content generation. The review discusses how automation can increase the reach and the speed of the messaging, but, unless tightly maintained, it risk losing alignment. Nonetheless, their analysis strengthens the view that consistency remains a strategic necessity as the communication environment becomes ever more complex. Organizations today can develop a constant narrative voice, whether it is driven by digital or human led media. Such capability is now seen as a mark of strategic maturity.

Fombrun and Shanley (1990) also provide early empirical evidence on the link between consistency in messaging and reputation of the organization. When stakeholders observe consistency in behavior, communication and identity of an organization, their reputational assessment tends to be more favorable. To have a reputation on social media is not something that just happens. It will be formed and reformed by communicating. In addition, the consistency of healthy communicate will maintain this reputation over the long term.

The study by Wolfgruber and Einwiller (2024) contributes an ethical angle. It shows that when inconsistent behavior or messaging contradicts the same, it loses credibility. Their findings reconfirm that the reputational gains from communicative behavior are conditional on message-behavior congruency. When people are inconsistent

regarding ethics or public commitments, this can lead to criticism and damage legitimacy and reputation.

Zaharna (2010), cross-cultural communication strategies, concludes consistency must be contextually determined. In fragmented and fragile settings, consistency does not mean sameness, but coherence across different culturally located stories. Groups that can move through these barriers and still deliver their message are the ones likely to gain legitimacy from many.

The literature converges on the understanding that, beyond a technical exercise of public relations, consistency allows the procedure to confer legitimacy and reputation. Enabling stakeholders to make better sense of what is happening in the world. These signals accumulate into perceptions that create an immediate sense of legitimacy and a longer-term payoff in reputational capital.

*H3a: Message consistency has a positive effect on organizational legitimacy.*

*H3b: Message consistency has a positive effect on organizational reputation.*

#### **2.2.4 Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is developing as a critical dimension of strategic communication, especially where stakeholders are engaged in unpredictable, digital, and real-time environments. Responsiveness refers to the organization's ability and willingness to listen to and respond to stakeholder feedback, issues and concerns. It shows a move away from talking at consumers to having a two-way dialogue to co-construct the message. This is particularly important in fragile or uncertain environments, where responsiveness is often seen as an indicator of transparency, agility and moral accountability.

According to the strategic communication literature, responsiveness is more than a tool of communication; it is a dynamic capability of firms to spot, make sense of, and comply or respond to shifting expectations. Strategic communication is purposeful or goal oriented, audience centered, responsive in nature. Responsiveness implies that communication acts of organization make the organization perceptive of stakeholders' clues and adjust their communication accordingly. Organizations bolster their legitimacy by showing that they are listening, learning, and changing with their audiences. This ability to engage helps build legitimacy.

Macnamara (2023) has a re-evaluative view of responsiveness, which is a related criterion of communicative value creation. According to him, responsive behaviour is an

unequivocal indicator of whether individuals and organizations are engaging in meaningful conversations, or simply delivering messages. If we look through this lens, we see that responsiveness is a vital manifestation of an organization's communicative competence. In other words, organizations must now exhibit their abilities to co-create meaning and maintain stakeholder trust. Such a relational dynamic strengthens both legitimacies, like attentiveness and accountability signals, and reputation, through consistency between promises and actions.

The internal responsiveness dimension is equally important. Men 2021 demonstrated that an organization's responsive internal communication is linked to the trust and engagement of employees. Organizations who respond and act on what employees want visibly increases the level of employee identification and alignment with the organization's goals. When the organization is responsive, its employees act within public space as informal carriers of the legitimacy and reputation of the same.

Responsiveness in stakeholder engagement is strategic (Friel, Murtarelli, and Ottaviani, 2024). According to them, stakeholders do not only scan messages anymore but monitor organization behaviour as well. Today, responsiveness is not only associated with being attentive, but also with a normative interpretation of transparency, care and ethics. Not speaking up during a public controversy can sometimes damage their reputation. This is especially true in more fragile contexts, where stakeholders want reassurance from an organization for their actions.

Etter, Ravasi, and Colleoni (2019) examine what responsiveness in digital communication environments means. Organizational reputation is now co-constructed in digital spaces where stakeholders expect prompt, genuine and reciprocal engagement. When a brand doesn't respond, or if it sends a generic auto-response, people usually think of it as a 'no-show'. These forces make responsiveness an asset and people evaluate organizations based on responsiveness on various platforms.

However, Weller and Lock (2025) reiterate that tools used to increase responsiveness can damage perceived authenticity. Automated responses should be fast but not at the expense of human touch. Especially, for sensitive and contested issues. It is even more sensitive for organizations situated in politically complex or unstable settings to balance operational responsiveness with stakeholder expectations.

Calibration in an environment that is cross-cultural and fragile political, responsiveness is a very significant act that can be inferred from Zaharna (2010). It conveys recognition, empathy, and legitimacy apart from information. If you do not act

like the locals do, it will hurt your reputation even when your technical message is right or timely.

Rhetorical processes of legitimation also critically depend on responsiveness. Cornelissen, Mantere, and Vaara, (2021) believe that legitimacy is not conferred as a static message, but is created through active discourse. The ability to respond help organizations can sense new trends in the public discourse to position their own narratives. This capacity to shift the communicative positioning of stakeholders in real time acts to increase the legitimacy of the organization as well as to create a buffer against the rapid deterioration of reputation under turbulent conditions.

Within this literature, responsiveness is a key pillar of strategic communication linking the organizational awareness of stakeholder perceptions. It provides legitimacy when the firm signals its accountability and accessibility and it sustains reputation by ensuring a similarity between stakeholder expectations and communicative behavior. The role of reputation is not merely supplementary but rather structural as it determines how firms are assessed and trusted.

*H4a: Responsiveness has a positive effect on organizational legitimacy.*

*H4b: Responsiveness has a positive effect on organizational reputation.*

### **2.2.5 Credibility and Trust**

Credibility and trust are underlying factors of strategic communication, especially in an environment of political vulnerability and institutional instability, or public scrutiny. Even if they are studied together, credibility and trust have different meanings. Most people probably think that credibility is reliability, competence and accuracy of the communicator or source. Trust goes beyond suspension of disbelief to cover expectations of good faith and fairness. They are important components of stakeholder message acceptance and organizational legitimacy.

According to Hallahan et al. (2007), strategic communication is defined as ‘goal-directed communication designed to influence stakeholder understanding and behavior’. Within this framework, credibility becomes a mechanism through which communicators gain initial access to stakeholder attention. In parallel, trust forms the long-term relational fabric that determines whether stakeholders continue to support, engage with, or advocate for an organization. In fragile contexts, where public skepticism is often high and

institutions lack deep-rooted legitimacy, credibility and trust function as critical substitutes for formal authority.

Credibility operates on multiple levels, source, message, and medium. Macnamara and Gregory (2018) highlight that audiences assess not only the message content but also the messenger's perceived integrity and expertise. In strategic communication, credibility is often co-constructed through alignment between messaging and stakeholder expectations. This alignment reinforces perceptions that the communicator is competent, informed, and acting in good faith. The degree to which the organization is perceived as consistent, transparent, and aligned with stakeholder values directly shapes its credibility, which in turn strengthens legitimacy claims.

Trust, while partly built on credibility, involves deeper assumptions about the intentions of the communicator. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) emphasize that trust develops through repeated interactions in which organizational actions reinforce stated commitments. The perception of reliability, doing what one says, and benevolence, acting in others' interest, both contribute to trust formation. In high-stakes or contested settings, trust serves as an intangible asset that cushions against reputational damage during crises. Its presence also enables stakeholders to give organizations the benefit of the doubt when information is incomplete or conflicting.

Zaharna (2010) adds a cultural layer to the understanding of trust in strategic communication. She explains that trust is not simply built through fact-sharing or consistency, but also through relational cues, cultural sensitivity, and the symbolic meaning of engagement. In contexts such as Palestine, where legitimacy is highly politicized and symbolic narratives carry historical weight, trust-building requires more than technical competence, it demands communicative empathy and value alignment.

Credibility and trust are not only inputs into stakeholder evaluation but are also outcomes of communicative strategy. When organizations communicate in ways that are perceived as credible and trustworthy, they enhance their overall legitimacy in the eyes of diverse audiences. Men (2021) highlights this particularly in internal communication, where trust in leadership communication predicts employee identification, loyalty, and willingness to act as informal ambassadors for the organization. The credibility of leadership messages, she argues, sets the tone for how external stakeholders also perceive the firm.

Credibility and trust also have significant reputational consequences. Rindova et al. (2005) distinguish between being known and being known for something. In this sense,

credibility helps determine the content of reputation— competence, integrity, or accountability; what the organization is known for. Trust strengthens the durability of that reputation, such that persists through time and among stakeholder groups. It's especially common in fragile settings where organizations have to defend their reputation amid competing narratives and constant uncertainty, and reputational judgments are often laden with moral significance.

According to Freberg et al. (2011), the credibility of the source influences the way in which the message is interpreted, shared and acted upon. Although the article is about social media influencers, the Organization is also included. To influence public opinion and institutional legitimacy, those who are trusted are able to do so. This shows how credibility and trust are not just abstract characteristics but operational assets with a direct impact on communicative influence.

Finally, credibility and trust have a reflexive quality. Elving et al. (2024) note that if an organization is perceived as credible and trustworthy, stakeholders will interpret future messages in a more positive way. This helps a project build a virtuous circle of legitimacy and reputation. On the other hand, if trust or credibility is lost, organizations will have to work much harder to get their stakeholders to trust them again, usually at diminished returns.

Across this literature, it is seen that credibility and trust are more than communicative preferences. The way organizations are viewed, supported, and assessed is influenced by strategic resources. With regard to fragile settings in particular, where institutions have little formal authority and acceptance, these two elements are crucial levers for legitimacy and reputation.

*H5a: Credibility and trust have a positive effect on organizational legitimacy.*

*H5b: Credibility and trust have a positive effect on organizational reputation.*

### **2.2.6 Moderating Role of Influencers and Celebrities**

As time goes by, influencers and celebrities are becoming key intermediaries between organizations and the public. Situations that involve fragmented information, low institutional trust and competition for attention make them very important. Strategic communication tries to influence the legitimation and reputation of a brand, individual, or event and can be achieved through coherent and consistent narratives to the members of the target audiences or through engagement with them. Influencers and celebrities

introduce a powerful external variable who can amplify the communicative effect, distort it or moderate it. Examination of Conceptual Foundations and Theoretical Logic of Their Moderating Role.

Celebrities and influencers act as symbolic carriers of meaning with social capital that organizations often lack. Freberg et al. (2011) offer an insight. The Instagram influencers' perceived authenticity, attractiveness and credibility endear them to audiences like never before. As a result, they are able to shape attitudes towards brands or messages more effectively than institutional communicators. The opinions, endorsement or critiques of others can strengthen or weaken trust. This is especially the case when audiences lack enough knowledge or experience with a firm.

Influencers are viewed as third-party validators in signaling theory. As Lou and Yuan (2019) note, consumers trust messages embedded in influencer content more because they perceive less bias than branded content. This impact is increased when conditions are fragile and/or uncertain, as the credibility of institutions is called into question and influencers become surrogate sources of judgment. According to Cho (2025), virtual influencers can engage the audience more powerfully by affecting their perception with personalization. With this, the paper suggests that while the form may change, the function will remain grounded in audience psychology.

By making celebrities closer to the masses, social media has further strengthened this phenomenon. According to Enke and Borchers (2019), influencers operate in an ecosystem of strategic communication whose relevance is not simply on popularity, but rather their ability to transfer organizational messages while still being personally relevant. Hence, their integration into the campaigns must be strategic and coherent with the positioning of the firm. Failing to achieve alignment might make things look like they lack authenticity or dilute the brand, giving rise to reputational damage.

The logic of moderation has to do with how these figures can disproportionately influence. Organizations can well design their strategic communication efforts, but their effectiveness will depend on how influential third parties react to the messages. In this way, influencers and celebrities serve who are not only amplifiers, but also filters as they modulate the strength and direction of the effects of strategic communication on legitimacy and reputation.

Furthermore, reputational dynamics are increasingly co-produced in digital spheres. Men (2021) notes that reputation is not merely transmitted by firms, but negotiated between multiple actors, including informal communicators. Influencers and

celebrities have a very critical place in the structured position of networked communication. Which makes them an important player in the legitimacy-reputation nexus. Their role is especially important in politically fragile or low-trust environments, where formal messaging often fails to gain traction, and symbolic gestures by popular figures can carry disproportionate weight.

The moderation effect also introduces risk. According to Zaharna (2010), the same power that allows influencers to legitimize messages will also allow them to delegitimize (or undermine) them. Therefore, careful strategy calibration of the challenged powers is essential in the event that they are contesting in spaces where public opinion is in flux and legitimacy claims are questioned.

In conclusion, influencers and celebrities are an important moderating variable in the relationship between strategic communication and organizational legitimacy and reputation. Just because they are present, it does not increase the likelihood of a positive outcome, but it does condition the effectiveness of the communication strategies. The ability of institutions to mobilize their symbolic capital in such a way that their messages do not interfere with one another nor draw suspicion

***H6a:*** *The relationship between strategic communication and organizational legitimacy is positively moderated by the presence of influencers and celebrities.*

***H6b:*** *The relationship between strategic communication and organizational reputation is positively moderated by the presence of influencers and celebrities.*

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodology used to achieve research objectives. It describes the research design and approach, data collection methods, sampling procedures, and statistical methods used. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was adopted using a structured questionnaire as an instrument to collect data. The reliability and validity of the instrument and the moderation analysis used to test the hypotheses are assured. This chapter has provided the picture, showing a clear roadmap for the collection and analysis of empirical evidence that addresses the study objectives.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research adopts a quantitative and cross-sectional design to systematically study the relationship between organizational communication strategies, legitimacy, and reputation, and the moderating effect of influencers within politically constrained environments. Quantitative research is particularly suited to this study because it allows the testing of the hypothesized relationships between variables, comparing perceptions from a wider sample, and arriving at results that can be generalized for the context under consideration (Ghanad, 2023; Myers et al., 2013).

A cross-sectional design was chosen for the study because it was focused on getting data accrued at a particular moment in time rather than changes occurring over a period. The cross-sectional design allows data collection simultaneously from various organizations, making it feasible as well as cost-effective in the strong yet shaken context of Palestine (Jesson, 2001; Setia, 2016).

The study will apply this design to observe and test the interplay between communication strategies and legitimacy/reputation and statistically assess whether influencers may be acting as moderators. In essence, this design acts in concert with the central aim of the study to provide measurable, contextual insights into how organizations are able to build and sustain credibility in fragile political environments.

### **3.3 Study Population and Context**

The study is situated within the Palestinian organizational context, where political, economic, and institutional fragility create unique challenges for organizations seeking to

build and maintain legitimacy and reputation. Weak formal institutions, high political uncertainty, and continuous socio-economic pressures characterize the Palestinian environment. Within such a setting, organizational communication plays a crucial role in shaping stakeholder trust and credibility, while informal actors, such as social media influencers, are increasingly influencing public perceptions and legitimacy judgments.

The study population comprises private medium and large-sized organizations operating in Palestine. These organizations are selected because they are more likely than small enterprises to engage in structured communication strategies and to have established reputational concerns at both national and regional levels. Medium and large organizations also tend to have greater visibility, making them more exposed to public scrutiny, political pressures, and influencer engagement.

The research specifically focuses on organizations within the financial and industrial sectors, including banking, telecommunications, hospitality, insurance, and the industrial sector. These sectors were chosen for several reasons:

- Economic significance – they represent core pillars of the Palestinian economy, generating employment, investment, and revenue.
- Public visibility – organizations in these sectors maintain frequent interaction with customers, regulators, and the wider public, making their legitimacy and reputation particularly salient.
- Exposure to institutional constraints – due to their dependence on political stability, regulatory frameworks, and public trust, these sectors face heightened legitimacy challenges in fragile environments.

### **3.3.1 Study Population in the Palestinian Context**

The study population was stratified along two dimensions: enterprise size and geographical location, to ensure representativeness and the sampling of the inherent diversity of experiences in organizations. This stratification was perceived as necessary to reflect the heterogeneity of Palestinian organizations, particularly in terms of resources, the visibility of markets, and political and institutional constraints.

First, enterprises were split on the basis of size into medium and large enterprises. Medium enterprises are those firms that have between 20 and 49 employees, whereas large enterprises are those that employ 50 or more persons. Such a division is consistent with international and regional classifications of enterprise size and is particularly crucial

given that the size of the organization matters in the Palestinian context when it comes to communication practices, exposure to the public, and issues of legitimacy.

Table 3.1: Organization size distribution

<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>
From 20 to 49 employees	More than 49 employees

This kind of stratification guarantees that both types of organizations have a decent representation in the sample, thus allowing the study to inquire into the extent to which organizational size may moderate the choice and effectiveness of communication strategies for legitimacy and reputation-building. Considering the second stratification level, it would be of a geographical nature. The study covers most of the West Bank governorates, differing in exposure to politics, economic opportunities, and institutional constraints. The stratification ensures that organizations from the northern, central, and southern parts of the West Bank are represented, thus capturing geographical variation in communication practices and legitimacy-building efforts.

Table 3.2: West Bank of Palestine governorate distribution

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Location</b>
Jenin Tylkarim Nablus Qalqilya Salfit Tubas	Northern of Westbank
Ramallah Jericho Jerusalem	Central of Westbank
Hebron Bethlehem	Southern of Westbank

This stratification provides a balanced geographical representation, ensuring that organizational practices in different socio-political and economic environments are included. For instance, organizations in the northern governorates may face different institutional constraints compared to those in Ramallah or Jerusalem, which are

considered central political and economic hubs. Similarly, organizations in Hebron and Bethlehem reflect the dynamics of the southern region.

### 3.3.2 Study Population Sectors

**3.3.2.1 Banking and Finance:** The financial sector in Palestine is regulated by the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA), which oversees banks, specialized credit institutions, money changers, payment systems, and capital and money markets. The banking sector is the primary channel of financing in Palestine, supporting economic growth through liquidity provision, private sector credit, and infrastructure investment (Association of Banks in Palestine). The banks, being the second basic component of the sector, are 13 operating banks in Palestine. These include 7 local banks (4 commercial and 3 Islamic) and 6 foreign banks. According to the Association of Banks in Palestine (ABP, 2025), the sector employed 7,525 persons in 2025. The banking staff at all levels contribute to the working of the financial system and economic stability. Table 3.3 presents the geographical distribution of banking in Palestine.

Table 3.3: Geographical distribution of banking in 2024

المنطقة الجغرافية	السكان	الفروع	الصراف الآلي	ودائع العملاء	التسهيلات المباشرة	سكان / فرع	سكان / صراف آلي	ودائع العملاء / فرع	تسهيلات / فرع
نابلس	443,663	44	93	2,053,489,052	1,173,399,103	10,083	4,771	46,670,206	26,668,161
جنين	363,462	34	57	1,103,473,169	425,935,727	10,690	6,377	32,455,093	12,527,521
طولكرم	211,277	23	46	742,480,096	231,542,291	9,186	4,593	32,281,743	10,067,056
قتيلية	131,113	9	19	339,703,634	124,529,719	14,568	6,901	37,744,848	13,836,635
طوباس	70,954	6	11	132,643,725	68,300,244	11,826	6,450	22,107,287	11,383,374
سلفيت	88,842	11	21	264,913,461	109,885,172	8,077	4,231	24,083,042	9,989,561
شمال الضفة	1,309,311	127	247	4,636,703,137	2,133,592,255	10,310	5,301	36,509,474	16,799,939
رام الله والبيرة	381,184	82	199	6,171,713,740	6,854,702,292	4,649	1,915	75,264,802	83,593,930
القدس	507,781	22	31	1,352,840,136	391,068,547	23,081	16,380	61,492,733	17,775,843
أريحا	56,752	11	17	226,889,679	232,927,231	5,159	3,338	20,626,334	21,175,203
وسط الضفة	945,717	115	247	7,751,443,555	7,478,698,071	8,224	3,829	67,403,857	65,032,157
الخليل	853,382	58	101	1,651,130,679	749,173,244	14,713	8,449	28,467,770	12,916,780
بيت لحم	252,173	28	55	1,381,638,797	636,955,232	9,006	4,585	49,344,243	22,748,401
جنوب الضفة	1,105,555	86	156	3,032,769,476	1,386,128,476	12,855	7,087	35,264,761	16,117,773
الضفة الغربية	3,360,583	328	650	15,420,916,167	10,998,418,802	10,246	5,170	47,014,988	33,531,765
شمال غزة	444,412	8	18	512,080,161	151,446,856	55,552	24,690	64,010,020	18,930,857
غزة	749,100	25	41	1,839,984,077	598,786,699	29,964	18,271	73,599,363	23,951,468
دير البلح	319,208	7	6	183,746,795	52,204,443	45,601	53,201	26,249,542	7,457,778
خان يونس	438,557	9	10	490,791,860	80,557,141	48,729	43,856	54,532,429	8,950,793
رفح	275,267	7	10	329,105,682	65,731,336	39,324	27,527	47,015,097	9,390,191
* قطاع غزة	2,226,544	56	85	3,355,708,576	948,726,475	39,760	26,195	59,923,367	16,941,544
الإجمالي	5,587,127	384	735	18,776,624,743	11,947,145,277	14,550	7,602	48,897,460	31,112,357

\* التقديرات السكانية لقطاع غزة للعام 2024 غير متوفرة وتم اعتماد بيانات 2023

3.3.2.2 **Insurance:** The insurance industry operates under the Palestine Capital Market Authority (PCMA). According to the Palestinian Capital Market Authority (2022), the insurance sector in the West Bank, as shown in Table 3.4, comprises 12 insurance companies, 187 branches, 1,770 employees, 212 agents and producers, 21 insurance intermediaries, and 3 reinsurance intermediaries (PCMA, 2025).

Table 3.4: Aggregated operational and financial data

Currency : (US Dollar)		العملة: (دولار أمريكي)				
Description		31/12/2025	30/09/2025	30/06/2025	31/03/2025	
		البيان				
General information	Number of companies				12	عدد شركات التأمين
	Number of branches				187	عدد الفروع والمكاتب
	Number of employees				1,770	عدد الموظفين
	Number of agents and producers				212	عدد الوكلاء و المنتجين
	Number of insurance intermediaries				21	عدد وسطاء التأمين
	Number of reinsurance intermediaries				3	عدد وسطاء إعادة التأمين
Insurance sector results	Motor insurance premiums				68,029,894	مجموع القساط تأمين المركبات
	Workers insurance premiums				10,979,675	مجموع القساط تأمين العمال
	Health insurance premiums				16,029,155	مجموع القساط التأمين الصحي
	Civil liability insurance premiums				1,822,793	مجموع القساط تأمين المسؤولية المدنية
	Non-life insurance premiums				3,099,092	مجموع القساط التأمينات العامة الاخرى
	Fire insurance premiums				5,928,303	مجموع القساط تأمين الحريق
	Marine insurance premiums				851,802	مجموع القساط التأمين البحري
	Engineering insurance premiums				2,936,427	مجموع القساط التأمين الهندسي
	Life insurance premiums				2,670,313	مجموع القساط تأمين الحياة
	Agriculture insurance premiums				6,651	مجموع القساط التأمين الزراعي
		Total insurance premiums				112,354,106

3.3.2.3 **Hospitality:** Hospitality is a significant growth sector in Palestine; in the Westbank there are 130 operating hotels. These hotels are geographically distributed as follows: 29 hotels in the North of the West Bank, 34 hotels in the Middle of the West Bank, 47 hotels in the South of the West Bank, and 20 hotels in Jerusalem (PIPA, 2017). According to PCBS (2020a), the hospitality sector employed a total of 1,638 workers, including both administrative and operational staff. The workforce composition was as follows: 414 administrative employees and 1,224 operational employees.

Table 3.5: The operating hotels distributed by region

Region	No. of Hotels	No. of Rooms	No. of Beds
North of West Bank	29	527	1,439
Middle of West Bank	34	1,621	3,328
South of West Bank	47	3,715	8,108
Jerusalem	20	1,480	3,242
Gaza Strip (2013)	12	536	985
Total in Palestine	142	7,879	17,102

3.3.2.4 **Industrial:** The industrial sector is a core component of the Palestinian economy, with approximately 14,000 registered firms across the West Bank and Gaza. According to PCBS (2020b), the private sector constitutes the majority of operating establishments in Palestine by ownership and region as of 2017, totaling 114,745 establishments. In the West Bank alone, there are 94,619 firms, as shown in Table 3.6. The total number of employed persons in the Palestinian labor market is 424,904, with 290,666 of them located in the West Bank, as illustrated in Table 3.5. Additionally, establishments employing 20 people or more account for only 1.4% (4,070) of the total, as depicted in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.6: Number of establishments operating by establishment ownership and region

Ownership								Region
Not Stated	International Organization	UNRWA	Foreign Gov.	Local Auth.	Central Gov.	Non Gov. Org. Sector	Private National	
75	193	529	90	1,173	7,429	3,688	140,745	Palestine*
68	110	199	66	921	5,473	2,364	94,619	West Bank
7	83	330	24	252	1,956	1,324	46,126	Gaza Strip

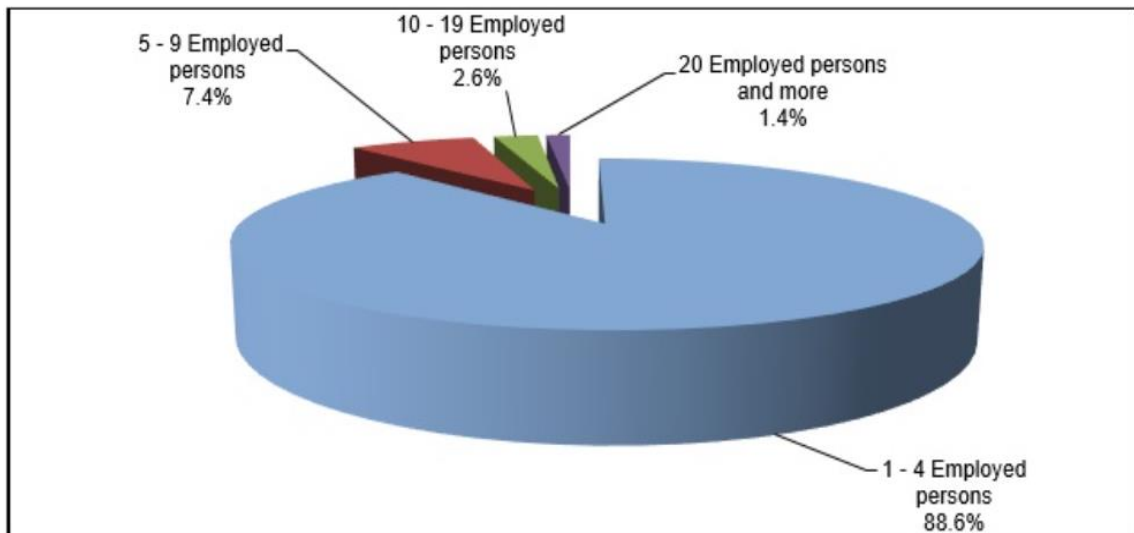


Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of operating establishments in the private sector in Palestine by employment size groups

**3.3.2.5 Telecommunications:** The Palestinian telecommunications sector includes fixed-line, mobile, and internet services. It operates under significant constraints due to institutional fragility, reliance on Israeli-controlled infrastructure, and outdated regulatory frameworks. The Paltel Group is the largest telecommunications holding company in Palestine, operating across multiple services, including fixed-line (Paltel), mobile (Jawwal), internet (Hadara), call centers (Reach), and media broadcasting (Palmedia). It employs approximately 3,000 staff distributed across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WEF, 2025).

Ooredoo Palestine, formerly known as Wataniya Mobile, entered the Palestinian market in 2009 and expanded operations to Gaza in 2017. According to its annual reports, Ooredoo employed 517 staff (Ooredoo, 2024).

### 3.4 Study Sample

This cross-sectional, quantitative study of the private organization in the West Bank of Palestine encompassed all employees in the Palestinian medium and large organizations to provide a general view at different organizational levels. The research utilized a stratified random sampling method in the selection of a sufficient sample from the population. The application of this method was preferred because it can cater to the variability of the industrial sector and ensure randomness at every stratum (Shao et al., 2021).

A stratified random sampling design was used to select the sample that captured the variability across organizational levels. Stratification was performed across two primary dimensions: organization size and location, by the number of people employed and activity, allowing the study to encompass the variability inherent in the organization sector while maintaining randomness within each subgroup. The total population of private medium and large organizations in the targeted sectors (financial and banking, industrial, hospitality, telecommunications, and insurance).

The study population sectors in Palestine collectively employs a substantial workforce. The banking and finance sector, regulated by the Palestine Monetary Authority, includes 13 operating banks and employs 7,525 persons in 2025. The insurance sector, supervised by the Palestine Capital Market Authority, comprised 12 companies with 187 branches and employed 1,770 workers. The industrial sector remains the largest employer, with about 14,000 firms across the West Bank and Gaza, accounting for 424,904 employed people (4,070 employed from medium and large organizations). The hospitality sector, consisting of 130 hotels distributed across the West Bank and Jerusalem, provided jobs for 1,638 employees, including both administrative and operational staff.

Finally, the telecommunications sector employed 3,517 workers, approximately 3,000 in the Paltel Group and 517 under Ooredoo Palestine. This means that the five set sectors employ more people than 14,450 and are thus critical to the activeness of the Palestinian labor market and economy. The population from which the targeted sample is drawn focuses on organizational communication strategies aimed at key actor groups such as stakeholders, top management, customer service units, and employees across organizational levels. These groups are reached through diverse strategies such as transparency reports, strategic briefings, digital platforms, customer feedback systems, internal newsletters, training workshops, collaboration tools, and recognition programs. Such approaches aim to enhance coordination, strengthen compliance, sustain motivation, and reinforce legitimacy and stakeholder trust. For this study, the selected sample represents approximately 10% of the total workforce, equivalent to 1,445 employees out of 14,450 employed persons in the selected sectors.

The private medium and large enterprises' minimum sample size of 304 was computed considering a marginal error of 5%, a confidence level of 95%, and an approximate response distribution of roughly 50% of the entire working population of

1,445 in the West Bank Palestinian medium and large organizations. It was computed utilizing the following formula utilizing the Raosoft® Application:

$$x = Z(c/100)^2 r(100 - r), \quad n = \frac{N \cdot x}{(N - 1)E^2 + x}, \quad E = \sqrt{\frac{(N - n)x}{n(N - 1)}}$$

**Where:**

- n: sample size.
- N: population size.
- Z: Z-value (1.96 for 95% confidence level).
- R: estimated proportion of the population.
- E: margin of error (alpha, 0.05).

### 3.4.1 Sampling Strategy and Sample Size Determination

The sampling design was carefully developed to represent the distribution of employed people in medium proportions (from 20 to 49 employees) and large (more than 49 employees) organizations in the West Bank governorates. As shown in Table 3.7, the medium organization data is equal to 58% and the large organization 42% (PCBS, 2024b).

Table 3.7: Number of establishments and employed individuals in the private sector organization by category of employment size and region

Employment Size Group	Palestine*			West Bank			Gaza Strip		
	No. of Establish	Unpaid Persons	Wage Employees	No. of Establish	Unpaid Persons	Wage Employees	No. of Establish	Unpaid Persons	Wage Employees
1-4	126,251	88,792	127,325	84,610	58,632	84,347	41,641	30,160	42,978
5-9	10,528	8,339	56,662	7,038	5,236	38,387	3,490	3,103	18,275
10-19	3,622	3,367	42,326	2,512	1,918	30,013	1,110	1,449	12,313
20-49	1,555	2,082	41,108	1,090	1,207	29,161	465	875	11,947
50-99	286	583	17,778	206	402	12,824	80	181	4,954
100 ++	158	248	36,294	119	236	28,303	39	12	7,991
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,400</b>	<b>103,411</b>	<b>32,1493</b>	<b>95,575</b>	<b>67,631</b>	<b>223,035</b>	<b>46,825</b>	<b>35,780</b>	<b>98,458</b>

The estimated sample for the stratified sample based on the organization size is the following:

Table 3.8: Number and Percent of Employed Persons and Sample Allocation by Governorate in the West Bank

Governorate	Sample Size	Number	% of Employed Persons
Medium	304	176	58%
Large		128	42%

The estimated sample size for each governorate was determined according to its percentage of the total number of employed people. The estimated population of the Palestinians in the State of Palestine at the end of 2024 was 5.49 million: 3.36 million in the West Bank (61.2%) and 2.13 million (38.8%) in the Gaza Strip. The highest population was in Hebron Governorate, with 15.0% of the total population (PCBS, 2024a) (See Figure 3.2).

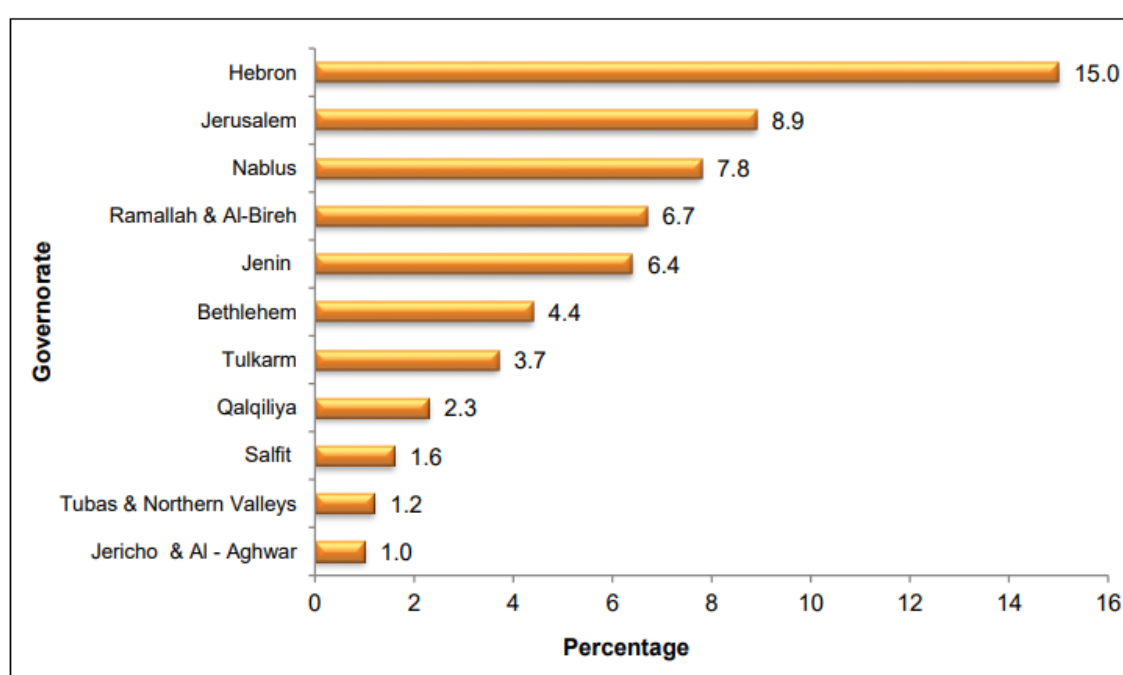


Figure 3.2: Percentage distribution of population in the state of Palestine by governorate

The labour force in the West Bank is presented in Table 3.9, which demonstrates the percentage of the population as workforce in the West Bank per governorate. The highest percentage of the population in the labour workforce is found in Jerusalem, 90% (PCBS, 2024a).

Table 3.9: Percentage distribution of individuals aged 15 years and above in the West Bank by region, governorate, labour force status, and sex, 2024

Region and Governorate	Labour Force Status and Sex															العلاقة بفترة العمل والجنس						المنطقة والمحافظه	
	المجموع			خارج القوى العاملة			داخل القوى العاملة			المجموع			بطالة			علاقة بفترة متصلة			علاقة تامة				
	Total			Outside LF			Inside LF			Total			Unemployment			Time Related Underemployment			Full Employment				
	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ	م	إ	ذ		م
T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
<b>West Bank</b>																						<b>الضفة الغربية</b>	
Jenin	100	100	100	55.7	87.8	26.4	44.3	12.2	73.6	100	100	100	41.3	50.6	39.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	58.7	49.4	60.1	جنين	
Tubas & Northern Valleys	100	100	100	45.8	73.4	21.1	54.2	26.6	78.9	100	100	100	23.1	26.8	22.0	1.5	0.8	1.6	75.4	72.4	76.4	طوباس والأغوار الشمالية	
Tulkarm	100	100	100	52.8	78.7	27.0	47.2	21.3	73.0	100	100	100	37.3	37.3	37.3	0.8	0.7	0.9	61.9	62.0	61.8	طولكرم	
Nablus	100	100	100	50.0	77.7	22.3	50.0	22.3	77.7	100	100	100	27.9	31.1	27.0	1.3	1.6	1.3	70.8	67.3	71.7	نابلس	
Qalqiliya	100	100	100	49.6	81.6	20.3	50.4	18.4	79.7	100	100	100	31.3	41.6	29.1	2.6	2.9	2.5	66.1	55.5	68.4	قلقيلية	
Salfit	100	100	100	54.7	85.3	28.1	45.3	14.7	71.9	100	100	100	28.8	22.0	30.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	71.0	78.0	69.8	سلفيت	
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	100	100	100	55.2	78.9	30.0	44.8	21.1	70.0	100	100	100	25.5	15.5	28.7	0.3	0.1	0.3	74.2	84.4	71.0	رام الله والبيرة	
Jericho & AL Aghwar	100	100	100	47.4	73.2	21.6	52.6	26.8	78.4	100	100	100	20.5	17.6	21.5	0.2	0.5	0.1	79.3	81.9	78.4	أريحا والأغوار	
Jerusalem	100	100	100	61.9	89.3	34.0	38.1	10.7	66.0	100	100	100	9.9	11.3	9.6	0.1	0.3	0.1	90.0	88.4	90.3	القدس	
Bethlehem	100	100	100	50.8	76.5	26.3	49.2	23.5	73.7	100	100	100	40.2	31.5	42.8	5.5	5.2	5.6	54.3	63.3	51.6	بيت لحم	
Hebron	100	100	100	53.6	83.8	25.2	46.4	16.2	74.8	100	100	100	39.4	36.7	40.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	60.5	63.3	59.9	الخليل	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54.0</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>73.4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>68.9</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>المجموع</b>	

The estimated stratified sample is based on the governorate workforce distribution in Table 3.10, which was extracted from the data in Tables 3.8 and 3.9.

Table 3.10: Number and Percent of Employed Persons and Sample Allocation by Governorate in the West Bank

Governorate	Employment Percent	Population Percent	Population Number	Target Sample %	Target Sample (out 304)
Jenin	58.7%	6.4%	351,360	10.8%	33
Tubas	75.4%	1.2%	65,880	2.0%	6
Tulkarm	61.9%	3.7%	203,130	6.3%	19
Nablus	70.8%	7.8%	428,220	13.2%	40
Qalqiliya	66.1%	2.3%	126,270	3.9%	12
Salfit	71.0%	1.6%	87,840	2.7%	8
Ramallah	74.2%	6.7%	367,830	11.4%	35
Jericho	79.3%	1.0%	54,900	1.7%	5
Jerusalem	90.0%	8.9%	488,610	15.1%	46
Bethlehem	54.3%	4.4%	241,560	7.5%	23
Hebron	60.5%	15.0%	823,500	25.4%	77
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,239,100</b>		<b>304</b>

### 3.5 Study Variables and Measures

**3.5.1 Strategic Communication Capabilities:** Forty-two indicators grouped under five dimensions are generally identified as at the core of this capability: narrative

framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness. Together, these dimensions describe the complete set of strategies with which organizations engage stakeholders and manage public perceptions.

- Narrative Framing: Eight indicators were used and validated by previous studies (Briant, 2019; Gregg et al., 2022; Melchiades Soares, 2023; Opitz et al., 2018; Sahibzada & Jia, 2025).
- Audience Targeting: Comprises seven items adapted from previous studies and used as research constructs, validated by (Briant, 2019; Flood-Grady et al., 2020; Gregg et al., 2022; Officer et al., 2022; Opitz et al., 2018; Sahibzada & Jia, 2025).
- Message Consistency: Tested by eight indicators that were used and supported by (Briant, 2019; Gregg et al., 2022; Officer et al., 2022; Opitz et al., 2018; Sahibzada & Jia, 2025; Schultz et al., 2011; Taylor & Perry, 2005).
- Credibility and Trust: Used through nine indicators that were adopted and validated by studies done by (Briant, 2019; Gregg et al., 2022; Men & Stacks, 2013; Officer et al., 2022; Opitz et al., 2018; Sahibzada & Jia, 2025; Schultz et al., 2011; Taylor & Perry, 2005; Wang & Liu, 2019).
- Responsiveness: Ten indicators that were utilized from previous studies by (Briant, 2019; Gregg et al., 2022; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Men & Stacks, 2013; Officer et al., 2022; Opitz et al., 2018; Sahibzada & Jia, 2025; Schultz et al., 2011; Taylor & Perry, 2005).

**3.5.2 Legitimacy:** Twelve indicators under the three dimensions are used to examine legitimacy. Following Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy is defined as a general perception that the conduct of an organization conforms with prevalent social norms, values, and expectations. This paper accepts a multidimensional concept of legitimacy. After Bitektine et al. (2020), that may include cognitive legitimacy-the recognition of the organization as a necessary and established actor-and sociopolitical legitimacy-the recognition of whether the goals and ways of the organization are in consonance with societal values and provide positive contributions to society. After these, the model captures two extra dimensions: perceived appropriateness and social acceptance, developed in Prado-Roman et al. (2020). The former refers to the degree to which the organization is seen as

acting correctly and fulfilling its entrusted social obligations. Together, these dimensions offer a solid foundation for addressing how organizational legitimacy is constructed and perceived along with the wider communication system.

**3.5.3 Reputation:** Eleven elements are evaluated under three dimensions to consider reputation. According to Bitektine et al. (2020), reputation is a social construct of judgment about some general standing or estimation of the firm in its environs. Complementarily, Men and Stacks (2013) define Perceived Organizational Reputation as a perceptual representation based upon an assessment of an organization's past actions and also the assessment of the organization's prospects, which together contribute to the overall appeal of the organization toward key constituents. In digital communication, Wang and Liu (2019) add that an organization is increasingly made visible by its engagement and credibility on social media platforms. Where relevant, additional dimensions of reputation concerning effectiveness in communication are considered in Prado-Roman et al. (2020). That study confirms the role of organizational communication in helping shape external perceptions of reputation. Taken together, these perspectives present a more robust and multidimensional basis for considering reputation as an outcome of strategic communication capability.

**3.5.4 Influencers and Celebrities:** Nineteen indicators under two main dimensions (Parasocial relationship and perceived influencer credibility) used to evaluate the moderation effect of influencers and celebrities, which was utilized by Reinikainen (2022). The use of influencers and celebrities is modeled separately from the five dynamic capability dimensions to assess whether and how it strengthens or alters the relationship between strategic communication capability and its intended outcomes, particularly legitimacy and reputation. This approach distinguishes between the organization's internal communication capabilities and its strategic use of external trusted figures in the communication ecosystem.

Table 3.11: Items for Measuring Constructs

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Previous studies</b>
<b>Strategic Communication Capabilities</b>	Narrative Framing	8	Soares (2023), Sahibzada et al. (2025), Briant (2019), Gregg et al. (2022), Opitz et al. (2018)
	Audience Targeting	8	Flood-Grady et al. (2020), Officer et al. (2022), Gregg et al. (2022), Briant (2019), Sahibzada et al. (2025), Opitz et al. (2018)
	Message Consistency	7	Schultz et al. (2011), Taylor & Perry (2005), Officer et al. (2022), Opitz et al. (2018), Briant (2019), Sahibzada et al. (2025), Gregg et al. (2022)
	Credibility and Trust	9	Men & Stacks (2013), Wang & Liu (2019), Schultz et al. (2011), Taylor & Perry (2005), Gregg et al. (2022), Opitz et al. (2018), Officer et al. (2022), Briant (2019), Sahibzada et al. (2025)
	Responsiveness	10	Kent & Taylor (2002) Schultz et al. (2011), Officer et al. (2022), Taylor & Perry (2005), Gregg et al. (2022), Opitz et al. (2018), Briant (2019), Sahibzada et al. (2025), Men & Stacks (2013)
<b>Legitimacy</b>	Cognitive Legitimacy	3	Bitektine et al. (2020)
	Sociopolitical Legitimacy	4	Bitektine et al. (2020)
	Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance	5	Prado-Roman et al. (2020)
<b>Reputation</b>	Generalized Reputation Judgment	4	Bitektine et al. (2020)
	Perceived Organizational Reputation (Internal View)	3	Men & Stacks (2013)
	Social media and Communication Influence on Reputation	4	Wang & Liu (2019), Prado-Román et al. (2020)
<b>Use of Influencers and Celebrities</b>	Parasocial Relationship	8	Reinikainen (2022)
	Perceived Influencer Credibility	11	Reinikainen (2022)

### **3.6 Pilot Study**

To ensure the clarity, reliability, and validity of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted before full-scale data collection. The major objectives of the pilot study were to detect potential problems in the wording, structure, and understanding of the items of the questionnaire and to establish the internal consistency of the measuring instrument.

Thirty participants, employees in different Palestinian institutions within the public sector, participated in the pilot study. These participants represented different types of roles, departments, and sectors. Ghazali (2016) discussed that the pilot study sample should consist of around 10% of the total sample size intended for the main study. It was important to exclude these participants later in the main survey to avoid any contamination of responses or bias in the final dataset. Upon completion of the online questionnaire, details were provided to the participants for feedback.

Before proceeding with the main data collection, for the fortification of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed for the internal reliability of the questionnaire. For every dimension, the coefficient was higher than the threshold value of 0.70, assuring an acceptable degree of internal consistency (Hair Jr et al., 2010). To ascertain that the questionnaire served its intended purpose, the results of the Pearson Correlation Test were presented to represent the validity of the questionnaire in measuring the intended variables (Sarmah & Hazarika, 2012).

### **3.7 Instrument Validity**

A technical instrument is deemed valid if it manages to measure adequately that which it intends to measure (Cook & Beckman, 2006). The researcher evaluated the content validity of the questionnaire by interviewing four experts: two were experts in strategic management, and two others were academic experts in research methods, one of whom was a statistician. The experts gave feedback concerning the format and content of the questionnaire and commented on the understandability of its items. Their comments were duly considered, and changes were made so that the instrument would measure correctly the intended variables of organizational communication strategies, legitimacy, reputation, and influencers in the Palestinian context.

The study used Pearson correlation analysis to test construct validity; the option was selected because of its consideration of the degree to which the value of each item

varies linearly with the construct it is supposed to measure. Therefore, it becomes an ideal and simple interpretation of the convergent validity measure of the item-construct association, or the degree to which items that theoretically should be related to each other are indeed measured in terms of correlations (Hair Jr et al., 2010; Hair Jr et al., 2025). Since the constructs were adapted from existing instruments, Pearson correlation served as a favorable and methodologically sufficient approach to testing item validity in the current study.

Based on the data in Appendix C, to assess the validity of the questionnaire, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted among the thirteen measured dimensions: narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, responsiveness, cognitive legitimacy, sociopolitical legitimacy, perceived appropriateness and social acceptance, generalized reputation judgment, perceived organizational reputation (internal view), social media and communication influence on reputation, parasocial relationship, perceived influencer credibility.

The results presented in Appendix C demonstrate strong evidence of construct validity across the measured dimensions. Most correlation coefficients were significant at either the 0.01 or 0.05 levels, with values generally exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.30, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Constructs such as perceived credibility, parasocial relationships, social media and communication, and perceived organizational reputation showed high intercorrelations with other dimensions, confirming their theoretical association. These results collectively affirm that the instrument reliably measures the intended constructs within the study framework.

### **3.8 Instrument Reliability**

Reliability stands as an equivalent of measurement being stable and consistent over periods of time, such that the instrument fairly measures the variables it is meant to measure (Meyer, 2010). The reliability of the present research is tested by Cronbach's alpha conventional statistical estimator of item/internal consistency of questionnaire scores. Cronbach's alpha sets forth the magnitude of positive covariance among items of a single construct (Cronbach, 1951).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient: The measurement of the scale for dependability varies between 0 and 1. Nunally and Bernstein (1994) hold that the said coefficient with a value of 0.70 or higher shall be deemed sufficient for internal consistency. So, it implies

that the items of the same construct for organizational communication strategies, legitimacy, reputation, and influencers are all studying the same underlying notion. If the alpha coefficient were less than 0.70, it would imply that the items in the referred scale are not adequately correlated and thus recommend changes in the items of the questionnaire. If the Cronbach alpha is 0.90 or higher, it would point to excellent reliability; that is to say, the items are highly correlated and have high internal consistency, which is advantageous for highly specified and focused constructs (Sharma, 2016).

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, as presented in Appendix D. The results indicate that all constructs exceeded the widely accepted minimum threshold of 0.70 suggested by Nunally and Bernstein (1994), with most values falling in the range of 0.70 – 0.90. This demonstrates a high level of internal consistency among the items within each construct. Constructs such as perceived influencer credibility ( $\alpha = 0.901$ ), parasocial relationship ( $\alpha = 0.832$ ), and perceived organizational reputation ( $\alpha = 0.715$ ) show particularly strong reliability, supporting the robustness of the instrument. Overall, the findings confirm that the measurement scales employed in the study are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

### **3.9 Data Collection**

Data collection, associated with all variables at hand, will take place simultaneously across several geographical zones and selected medium and large organizations: banking, telecommunications, hospitality, and insurance, to eliminate unwanted variability. The strategy permitted a complete and profound quantitative study of the organization's field, addressing variation at various organizational levels and enterprise attributes, without compromising the cross-sectional study design.

To perform this research study, a structured digital survey questionnaire was set up. The instrument was constructed in English beforehand using proven scales from prior research relevant to the area of study. An expert panel went over the instrument to determine the content validity. Then, following their suggestions, any changes required were made to enhance clarity and relevance. The electronic questionnaire was circulated among the respondents of the selected organizations through WhatsApp or email. Data collection will be from July 2025 to the last of August 2025.

The most widely spoken language in the West Bank is Arabic; because of this, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic using the back-translation approach to

maintain semantic comparability. The text was first translated from English to Arabic by a bilingual expert, and then, the text was translated back from Arabic to English by a second bilingual expert.

The resulting instrument was divided into sections containing demographic and other items on a 5-point Likert scale to measure the underlying constructs. This careful translation and development process ensured the instrument's linguistic and cultural equivalency to the study's target medium and large organizations of the West Bank of Palestine.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

The study investigated every reasonable approach to ensure the ethical integrity of the research. All activities included in the study followed the norms and codes of research procedures set forth by the Arab American University Palestine (AAUP). Ethical clearance will be obtained from the university's ethics committee before commencing any form of data collection to ensure adherence to all ethical considerations.

The initial section of the questionnaire contains a detailed information sheet that describes the aim of the study, its objectives, and its importance. This will be given to everyone who will be assisting with the study to allow them an opportunity to make an informed choice about becoming a participant. The information page stated that agreeing to participate was entirely voluntary and that participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

No personally identifying details, such as names or other private personal information, were recorded to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Participants were assured that their information would be held in confidence and would not be made available to any third parties. The collected data will be stored securely in a password-protected computer, accessible only to the researcher and his/her supervisor.

Likewise, the study adhered to the principle of non-maleficence in which no physical, emotional, or professional harm was done to the participants. The questionnaire was carefully constructed to avoid entering sensitive or intrusive questions that induce discomfort. The questions were, therefore, concerning only the relevant variables, which were organizational communication strategies, legitimacy, reputation, and influencers.

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

The present study is bound to an analytical problem, thereby laying out some quantitative parameters in order to emphasize the notion of organizational communication strategies, legitimacy, reputation, and influencers. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling are combined to ensure the rigorous testing of the hypothesized relationships.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be selected as a key analytical technique because it would allow one to test simultaneously both measurement and structural models within the same study framework (Kline, 2023). Contrary to standard regression techniques, SEM considers measurement error, it allows the use of multiple indicators for each latent variable, while also allowing for testing the relationships, both direct and indirect, that might exist between the variables (Chin, 1998; Hair Jr et al., 2010). This is relevant to the current inquiry concerning relationships among thirteen multidimensional constructs and with the moderation of influencers.

SEM provides a very powerful means for assessing convergent and discriminant validity, testing mediator and moderator effects, and estimating overall model fit, all of which strongly support the explanation of the model in comparison to single-equation-based modeling (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair Jr et al., 2014). Considering its advantages, SEM was utilized to ensure sound methodology and to grasp the more complex phenomena of communication strategies, legitimacy, and reputation in the Palestinian organizational setup.

#### **3.11.1 Descriptive Statistics**

The first component of the study analyzes the descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages of all major study variables and demographic variables. Thus, information that will give an overview of the participant profile, for example, age, gender, and educational level. An overview of the institution profile includes services such as service activity, institution size, and institution location. Additionally, it gives trends or inclinations about the status of the data in any way about organizational communication strategy, legitimacy, reputation, and influencers.

### 3.11.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model will be evaluated to guarantee that the observed variables accurately reflect the underlying constructs. This evaluation involved three main steps:

- **Internal Consistency Reliability:** Internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Cronbach's alphas of 0.70 or above were considered sufficient, and CRs of 0.90 or above were considered strong reliability. This guaranteed that the items within each construct consistently measured the same underlying construct (Hair Jr et al., 2010).
- **Convergent Validity:** Convergent validity will be established with the help of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An AVE value of 0.50 and above was taken to indicate adequate convergence so that items for a given construct described a very high level of variance between them. This condition confirmed that the indicators correctly loaded on their respective latent variables (Hair Jr et al., 2014).
- **Discriminant Validity:** Discriminant validity will be determined through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The procedure had verified that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Whereas the other method resided behind HTMT values below 0.85 to assure discriminant validity, thus indicating constructs to be very similar to one another (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Cross-loading, which determines how measurement items are loaded on different constructs, is the last step in assessing Discriminant Validity (Chin, 1998).

### 3.11.3 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model will be tested to examine the hypothesized relationships and establish the overall predictive capability of the model. This involved four important phases:

- **Indicator Collinearity:** The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) will be used to analyze collinearity among indicators. It has been accepted that multicollinearity is not a problem when the VIF has a value less than five; thus, the calculation of structural path estimates will be consistent and reliable (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982).

- **Effect Size ( $f^2$ ):** The effect size will be estimated using f-squared ( $f^2$ ) for every independent variable on the dependent variables: 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effect size categories to respectively describe the relative importance of each predictor (Cohen, 1992).
- **Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ):** The R-squared ( $R^2$ ) value will be computed to assess the model's explanatory capacity. Cohen (2013) regarded  $R^2$  values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 as weak, medium, and large, respectively, and suggested a level to which the independent variables accounted for variance in the dependent variables.
- **Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ ):** For predicting relevance purposes, the Stone-Geisser test  $Q^2$  is employed. Thus,  $Q^2 > 0$  represents a predictive relevance of the model and endorses it as useful in predictions for legitimacy, reputation in the Palestinian organizations (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

#### 3.11.4 Hypothesis Testing

The importance of direct, indirect, and total effects within the structural model rests on standardized regression weights (beta coefficients) and p-values. A p-value of less than 0.05 shows statistically significant associations between variables. The mediating effects of influencers will be tested through a bootstrapping method to validate the mediating role between organizational communication strategies for both organizational reputation and legitimacy in the Palestinian context (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

## **Chapter Four: Result**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The data analysis results examining the relationships among key constructs are presented in this chapter. Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS), Organizational Legitimacy (LEG), and Reputation (REP) have been empirically tested in Palestinian medium- and large-sized organizations with consideration of the moderating role of the use of influencers and celebrities (UIC). This chapter contains respondent demographics, evaluation of the measurement model for reliability and validity, and structural model testing of hypothesized effects supported by statistical indicators. The findings provide systematic connections between the empirical evidence and the study's conceptual framework.

### **4.2 Characteristics of Respondents**

- The sample consists predominantly of male respondents (70.7%), reflecting possibly the gender distribution in the sectors studied.
- The largest age groups are those between 36 to 45 years (33.2%) and over 45 years (35.9%), indicating a mature workforce with considerable experience.
- Regarding education, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (62.2%) or a master's degree (28.9%), with a smaller share holding doctoral degrees (6.9%).
- The participants have extensive work experience, and more than half (52.0%) of them have been working for over 10 years.
- The sample also covers different organizational positions, with the largest percentages of administrative staff (29.6%) and managers (22.4%).
- The respondents come from various sectors, with the largest representation from industrial services (31.6%) and banking and finance (25.7%).
- The central West Bank is the geographical area that houses the highest proportion of institutions, with 47.4% of them located there.
- The vast majority of organizations, 57.2%, are of large size with more than 49 employees.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics Analysis (Gender)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percentage%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	215	70.7%
	Female	89	29.3%
<b>Age</b>	Less than 25 years	24	7.9%
	From 25 to 35 years old	70	23.0%
	From 36 to 45 years old	101	33.2%
	More than 45 years old	109	35.9%
<b>Education Degree</b>	Below a bachelor's degree	6	2.0%
	Bachelor's degree	189	62.2%
	Master's degree	88	28.9%
	Doctoral degree	21	6.9%
<b>Work Experience</b>	Less than 3 years	18	5.9%
	From 3 to 5 years	41	13.5%
	From 6 to 10 years	87	28.6%
	More than 10 years	158	52.0%
<b>Job Role Level</b>	Stakeholders or board members	23	7.6%
	Manager	68	22.4%
	Head of department	41	13.5%
	Policy advisor or consultant	24	7.9%
	Administrative staff	90	29.6%
	Customer Service	31	10.2%
	Marketing	27	8.9%
<b>Sector Activity</b>	Banking and Finance Services	78	25.7%
	Telecommunications Services	47	15.5%
	Hospitality Services	41	13.5%
	Insurance Services	42	13.8%
	Industrial Services	96	31.6%
<b>Institution Location</b>	Northern West Bank	65	21.4%
	Central West Bank	144	47.4%
	Southern West Bank	95	31.3%
<b>Institution Size</b>	Medium (From 20 to 49 employees)	130	42.8%
	Large (More than 49 employees)	174	57.2%
<b>Total</b>		304	100.0%

### 4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for major constructs of the study in relation to participant responses on a five-point Likert scale are presented in this section. Participants' perceptions were measured using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The numerical responses, which ranged from 1 to 5, were then converted to three levels (low, moderate, and high) for result interpretation by applying the following formula for class interval (Salleh & Othman, 2019):

$$\text{Category width} = \frac{\text{Highest value} - \text{Lowest value}}{\text{Number of assumed levels}}$$
$$1.33 = \frac{5 - 1}{3}$$

Based on this, the mean levels are classified as:

- Low: 2.33 or less (mean  $\leq 1 + 1.33$ )
- Moderate: from 2.34 to 3.67 (from  $2.33 + 0.01$  to  $2.33 + 1.33$ )
- High: from 3.68 to 5 (mean from  $3.67 + 0.01$  up to 5.00)

#### 4.3.1 Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS)

The descriptive statistics for OCS show that there was very high concurrence among the respondents, which means that robust practices were implemented throughout the Palestinian organizations. The average score for OCS is 3.971 (SD = 0.809), indicating that 88.3% responses were positive and only 7.8% were negative. This implies that there were good perceptions of communication efforts in the organization. Table 4.1 illustrates the OCS results.

- **Narrative Framing (NF):** achieves an overall mean score of 3.913 (SD = 0.841), with 84.2% of the respondents' feedback being positive, which indicates that the organizations are really good at building and showing their narrative content.
- **Audience Targeting (AT):** is similarly strong respondents' perceptive, with a mean of 3.936 (SD = 0.816) and 86.8% positive feedback, which means that the organizations have done a great job at recognizing stakeholder groups and engaging them.

- **Message Consistency (MC):** reports a mean of 3.971 (SD = 0.752), which shows that 91.4% of the surveyed individuals see organizational communication as being clear and consistent among different channels.
- **Credibility and Trust (CT):** emerges as the highest-performing construct, with a mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.805), and 92% of the feedback is positive, which shows that most of the stakeholders consider the communication to be reliable and trustworthy.
- **Responsiveness (RES):** also receives a high mean score of 3.953 (SD = 0.832), and 87.1% of the feedback is positive, which is an indication that the organizations are very quick in recognizing and solving customer problems.

Table 4.2: Organizational communication strategies descriptive statistics result

Construct	Q.#	Mean	SD	% of Negative response	% of Neutral	% of Positive response	Level of Agreement
NF	NF1	4.178	0.857	8.3%	4.0%	97.1%	Medium
	NF2	3.727	0.905	14.7%	17.3%	77.3%	High
	NF3	4.092	0.673	3.6%	9.4%	96.4%	High
	NF4	4.046	0.815	7.2%	11.2%	91.0%	High
	NF5	3.628	0.903	12.9%	29.1%	67.3%	Medium
	NF6	3.921	0.788	5.8%	20.1%	83.5%	High
	NF7	3.868	0.931	13.3%	13.3%	82.7%	High
	NF8	3.845	0.855	7.6%	23.7%	78.1%	High
	<b>Overall</b>		3.913	0.841	9.2%	16.0%	84.2%
AT	AT1	3.980	0.840	8.6%	11.5%	89.2%	High
	AT2	3.951	0.788	7.9%	10.8%	90.6%	High
	AT3	3.852	0.788	5.0%	25.9%	78.4%	High
	AT4	3.938	0.867	9.4%	14.4%	85.6%	High
	AT5	4.049	0.758	5.0%	11.5%	92.8%	High
	AT6	4.036	0.785	7.2%	7.9%	94.2%	High
	AT7	3.964	0.818	7.9%	13.7%	87.8%	High
	AT8	3.720	0.885	12.6%	21.2%	75.5%	High
	<b>Overall</b>		3.936	0.816	8.0%	14.6%	86.8%
MC	MC1	4.066	0.657	4.3%	6.1%	98.9%	High
	MC2	3.964	0.696	4.7%	13.3%	91.4%	High
	MC3	3.951	0.829	9.4%	11.2%	88.8%	High
	MC4	3.895	0.797	7.2%	18.3%	83.8%	High
	MC5	3.891	0.734	7.6%	12.2%	89.6%	High
	MC6	4.033	0.753	6.1%	8.6%	94.6%	High
	MC7	3.997	0.798	7.9%	9.0%	92.4%	High
	<b>Overall</b>		3.971	0.752	6.7%	11.3%	91.4%
<b>CT</b>	CT1	3.957	0.906	12.2%	8.3%	88.8%	High

	CT2	4.007	0.860	8.6%	10.8%	89.9%	High
	CT3	4.112	0.875	7.9%	10.4%	91.0%	High
	CT4	4.020	0.779	6.1%	13.7%	89.6%	High
	CT5	3.997	0.790	5.4%	16.9%	87.1%	High
	CT6	4.191	0.806	6.5%	5.4%	97.5%	High
	CT7	4.082	0.764	5.0%	12.6%	91.7%	High
	CT8	4.260	0.691	1.8%	9.0%	98.6%	High
	CT9	4.095	0.776	5.8%	9.7%	93.9%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.080</b>	<b>0.805</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>High</b>
	RES1	3.822	0.853	11.2%	14.4%	83.8%	High
	RES2	3.954	0.807	7.2%	15.5%	86.7%	High
	RES3	3.839	0.862	12.2%	11.9%	85.3%	High
	RES4	4.115	0.781	5.0%	11.5%	92.8%	High
	RES5	3.918	0.865	10.4%	14.4%	84.5%	High
<b>RES</b>	RES6	3.816	0.911	12.9%	17.3%	79.1%	High
	RES7	4.115	0.838	7.6%	10.1%	91.7%	High
	RES8	4.076	0.790	5.8%	10.8%	92.8%	High
	RES9	3.993	0.708	3.2%	16.9%	89.2%	High
	RES10	3.885	0.899	10.4%	14.4%	84.5%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.953</b>	<b>0.832</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>87.1%</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>OCS</b>		<b>3.971</b>	<b>0.809</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>88.3%</b>	<b>High</b>

#### 4.3.2 Organization Legitimacy (LEG)

The organizational LEG constructs results, which were evaluated via its three constructs: Cognitive Legitimacy (CL), Sociopolitical Legitimacy (SOL), and Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance (PASA), have shown a high consensus among the respondents. Overall, the mean of the entire LEG construct has been calculated to be 4.037 (SD = 0.822), which means almost 90% of the respondents consider their organizations as legitimate in the areas of cognitive, sociopolitical, and social acceptance.

- **Cognitive Legitimacy (CL):** the average mean score is 4.057 (SD = 0.922), with 88.6% of responses indicating positive agreement. All three items within this construct achieve high levels of mean scores, with the highest at 4.12. Notably, negative responses are limited, ranging from just over 7% to 15%, while neutral responses remain generally below 13%. This reflects that most participants perceive their organizations as well understood and accepted by stakeholders.
- **Sociopolitical Legitimacy (SOL):** has a very high general average of 4.115 (SD = 0.81), and 92.7% of replies are positive, which is the largest percentage of all factors. Every item on the scale is very high, particularly SOL3 with 4.197, which

means that the respondents are almost unanimously in agreement that their organizations are well within the social and regulatory expectations. The occurrence of negative and neutral responses is at a minimum, which indicates that there is stakeholder acceptance of the social and regulatory stance of the companies' activities.

- **Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance (PASA):** the average for the construct reflects 3.982 (SD = 0.849), and there are 87.2% of responses are positive. The means of the items are very close to and even beyond 4.0, and negative responses are very few, the maximum being 15.1%. This construct portrays a situation in which the organizations are very much perceived as having acted properly and being socially accepted by their stakeholders.

Table 4.3: Legitimacy descriptive statistics result

Construct	Q.#	Mean	SD	% of Negative response	% of Neutral	% of Positive response	Level of Agreement
CL	CL1	4.122	0.817	7.2%	9.0%	93.2%	High
	CL2	4.026	0.985	15.1%	6.1%	88.1%	High
	CL3	4.023	0.963	12.2%	12.6%	84.5%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	4.057	0.922	11.5%	9.2%	88.6%	High
SOL	SOL1	4.043	0.902	10.8%	9.7%	88.8%	High
	SOL2	4.164	0.791	6.8%	6.1%	96.4%	High
	SOL3	4.197	0.792	4.7%	11.5%	93.2%	High
	SOL4	4.056	0.754	5.0%	11.9%	92.4%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	4.115	0.810	6.8%	9.8%	92.7%	High
PASA	PASA1	4.086	0.740	4.7%	11.5%	93.2%	High
	PASA2	3.921	0.848	9.7%	13.7%	86.0%	High
	PASA3	3.944	0.995	15.1%	11.9%	82.4%	High
	PASA4	3.993	0.804	6.8%	14.0%	88.5%	High
	PASA5	3.967	0.855	8.6%	14.7%	86.0%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	3.982	0.849	9.0%	13.2%	87.2%	High
<b>LEG</b>		4.037	0.822	7.6%	12.3%	89.4%	High

### 4.3.3 Reputation (REP)

The findings for the organizational ERP construct and its major constructs show that the respondents have a very positive perception of their organizations' reputational standing. The overall REP construct has an average score of 4.18 (SD = 0.781) and displays a very strong positive endorsement. This result points to a very strong organizational reputation that is recognized both by the organization itself and by the

outside world, and is being communicated through modern engagement techniques like social media, which are also quite effective.

- **Generalized Reputation Judgment (GRJ):** This construct indicates that there was a very high consensus among the evaluators, and the overall mean score was 4.142 (SD = 0.774), while 95% of the respondents provided positive ratings. The averages of the separate statements vary from 4.06 to 4.23, thus showing that the respondents trust very much in the company's reputation very much among others.
- **Perceived Organizational Reputation (POR):** the POR indicates a higher level, with a mean score of 4.261 (SD = 0.757) and 98.6% of positive responses. The POR2 records the highest with a mean of 4.405, which shows that the good reputation of the organization and is recognized by the stakeholders and employees to a great extent.
- **Social Media and Communication on Reputation (SMCI):** The findings of the SMCI are very clear, with a mean of 4.137 (SD = 0.812) and 93.5% acceptance. The finding supports the view that digital communication is important in changing and creating reputation-related perceptions.

Table 4.4: Reputation descriptive statistics result

Construct	Q.#	Mean	SD	% of Negative response	% of Neutral	% of Positive response	Level of Agreement
<b>GRJ</b>	GRJ1	4.059	0.854	5.8%	18.3%	85.3%	High
	GRJ2	4.115	0.777	6.1%	7.9%	95.3%	High
	GRJ3	4.161	0.751	5.4%	5.0%	98.9%	High
	GRJ4	4.234	0.714	4.0%	5.0%	100.4%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	4.142	0.774	5.3%	9.1%	95.0%	High
<b>POR</b>	POR1	4.247	0.768	4.3%	5.8%	99.3%	High
	POR2	4.405	0.706	3.2%	3.2%	102.9%	High
	POR3	4.132	0.798	5.8%	10.1%	93.5%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	4.261	0.757	4.4%	6.4%	98.6%	High
<b>SMCI</b>	SMCI1	4.128	0.833	7.2%	9.0%	93.2%	High
	SMCI2	4.161	0.773	5.4%	7.9%	96.0%	High
	SMCI3	4.234	0.759	3.2%	10.8%	95.3%	High
	SMCI4	4.016	0.903	11.2%	9.0%	89.2%	High
	<b>Overall</b>	4.137	0.812	6.6%	9.2%	93.5%	High
<b>REP</b>		4.180	0.781	4.1%	6.2%	71.8%	High

#### 4.3.4 Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC)

The construct Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC), which encompasses both Parasocial Relationship (PR) and Perceived Influencer Credibility (PIC), yielded an overall mean of 3.298 (SD = 1.111), indicating a medium level of agreement among the respondents. The percentage distribution indicates that 30.1% gave negative comments, 29.9% were neutral, and 49.3% showed positive agreement, which means that influencer-based strategies are moderately effective, but the audience's perception is mixed.

- **Parasocial Relationship (PR):** The average score of all items was 3.384 (SD = 1.080), which indicates that the level of agreement could be termed as medium. It was found that around 26.3% of the respondents provided negative responses, 30.4% remained neutral, and 52.7% provided positive responses. The means of the individual items ranged from 3.227 to 3.559, indicating that the items were perceived to have moderate and consistent agreement throughout. The item that had the highest mean (3.559) was for PR1; it suggests that there is a detectable and more intense emotional connection with the influencers, whereas PR5 (3.227) reflects less agreement and thus suggests different levels of attachment and identification.
- **Perceived Influencer Credibility (PIC):** The overall mean score was 3.211 (SD = 1.142), which was interpreted as a medium level of agreement. On average, 34.0% of participants reported negative responses, 29.3% were neutral, and 46.0% were positive. Item means ranged from 3.082 to 3.306, reflecting relatively consistent perceptions of moderate credibility. The highest-rated item (PIC2, mean = 3.306) indicates a somewhat positive view of influencers' reliability, whereas PIC10 (mean = 3.082) received the lowest rating, showing weaker agreement regarding influencers' expertise or trustworthiness.

Table 4.5: Use of influencers and celebrities' descriptive statistics result

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Q.#</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>% of Negative response</b>	<b>% of Neutral</b>	<b>% of Positive response</b>	<b>Level of Agreement</b>
<b>PR</b>	PR1	3.559	1.010	18.7%	30.9%	59.7%	Medium
	PR2	3.480	1.021	21.6%	30.9%	56.8%	Medium
	PR3	3.388	1.090	26.6%	31.3%	51.4%	Medium
	PR4	3.276	1.139	31.7%	29.9%	47.8%	Medium
	PR5	3.227	1.159	32.0%	31.7%	45.7%	Medium
	PR6	3.418	1.053	25.2%	28.8%	55.4%	Medium
	PR7	3.336	1.081	28.4%	31.3%	49.6%	Medium
	PR8	3.391	1.091	25.9%	28.8%	54.7%	Medium
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.384</b>	<b>1.080</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>52.7%</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>PIC</b>	PIC1	3.286	1.120	30.6%	29.5%	49.3%	Medium
	PIC2	3.306	1.121	29.1%	30.2%	50.0%	Medium
	PIC3	3.266	1.101	29.5%	33.1%	46.8%	Medium
	PIC4	3.211	1.129	30.2%	34.5%	44.6%	Medium
	PIC5	3.230	1.166	34.2%	26.6%	48.6%	Medium
	PIC6	3.266	1.128	32.4%	27.7%	49.3%	Medium
	PIC7	3.217	1.148	36.0%	25.2%	48.2%	Medium
	PIC8	3.132	1.195	39.6%	26.3%	43.5%	Medium
	PIC9	3.211	1.109	33.1%	32.0%	44.2%	Medium
	PIC10	3.082	1.165	40.3%	29.9%	39.2%	Medium
	PIC11	3.115	1.184	39.2%	27.3%	42.8%	Medium
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.211</b>	<b>1.142</b>	<b>34.0%</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	<b>Medium</b>	
<b>UIC</b>		<b>3.298</b>	<b>1.111</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	<b>Medium</b>

#### 4.4 Evaluation of the Study Model

The study used a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach for testing the good fit of the conceptual framework, with the procedures carried out in SmartPLS. PLS-SEM is often used when dealing with models with many constructs and indicators. Hence, the technique is useful in research situations where theory has yet to be developed or refined. This technique is also considered suitable for data that may not necessarily meet the assumption of normality and, hence, would be an appropriate analytical method in this research based on Hair Jr et al. (2017) and Chin (1998).

Before proceeding with the analysis, the dataset was rigorously examined for its normality to determine suitability for subsequent analytical uses. The normality inspection involved checking the skewness and kurtosis values. The skewness and

kurtosis statistics remained within acceptable ranges, justifying the use of PLS-SEM for this study.

The measurement model evaluation was the process that confirmed the consistency and validity of the constructs. To check the internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability were used, thus confirming that the indicators were appropriate for their respective constructs. By using outer loadings and AVE, the convergent validity was established; meanwhile, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT ratios, and cross-loadings were used to prove the discriminant validity. After validating the measurement model, the structural model was then analyzed. Multicollinearity was examined through VIF.  $R^2$  was applied to indicate the portion of variance explained,  $Q^2$  was used to measure the predictive relevance through the blindfolding technique, and  $f^2$  was utilized to show the effect size of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variables, thus proving the robustness and predictive power of the model overall.

#### **4.4.1 Assessment of Data Normality**

In order to assess the appropriateness of the data for parametric statistical tests, the normality of all measurement items was re-evaluated by means of skewness and kurtosis values. According to Kim (2013), skewness values falling between  $\pm 2.0$  and kurtosis values not exceeding 7.0 imply a tolerable degree of normality for social science data. Appendix E displays the results indicating that all items of the study constructs, such as OCS, LEG, REP, and UIC, have skewness and kurtosis values within the acceptable ranges, thus confirming the data distribution as approximately normal.

The OCS construct, which comprises NF, AT, MC, CT, and RES as sub-constructs, yielded skewness and kurtosis values of approximately  $-1.364$  to  $-0.496$  for skewness and  $-0.139$  to  $3.446$  for kurtosis, respectively. The general findings demonstrate very slight negativity in the skewness, indicating that the perceptions of the respondents were slightly more inclined to the positive side, which indeed is the case with the communication practices.

The LEG construct, consisting of CL, SOL, and PASA, exhibited skewness values from  $-1.066$  to  $-0.737$  and kurtosis values from  $-0.454$  to  $1.389$ . Such results signify a very slight negative skewness and a distribution of responses more so as a flat-topped curve or even less than that, thus indicating the responses were not much off from being equal. For REP, including GRJ, POR, and SMCI, the skewness values fluctuated between

-1.439 and -0.722, and the kurtosis values varied between 0.145 and 3.179. This pattern once more points to the presence of an acceptable normal distribution since there was a rather large segment of the respondents who preferred to agree, thus indicating a positive perception of reputation.

Finally, the UIC construct consisting of PR and PIC exhibited the most even distributions. The calculated skewness varied between roughly -0.227 to +0.192, and kurtosis values were between -1.052 and -0.760, all signifying very close to symmetrical distributions and less pronounced tails compared to a normal curve. Thus, it can be inferred that opinions about influencers and their credibility were fairly dispersed with no significant response bias.

#### **4.4.2 Internal Consistency Reliability**

At this point in time, the assessment registered the internal consistency reliability of the measurement model to find out if the items in each construct were consistently measuring the same underlying concept. Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and Composite Reliability (CR) values, which are shown in Table 4.6, were used to evaluate internal consistency. According to Hair Jr et al. (2010), a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.70 is regarded as acceptable, while a value above 0.90 indicates excellent reliability. Likewise, a CR value of over 0.70 denotes a high degree of internal consistency; however, for exploratory research, a value of 0.60 or greater is still considered acceptable. These limits guarantee that the constructs applied in the research accurately and reliably depict the hidden constructs that are being measured.

- **First-Order Constructs**

The constructs of the first order were all with very high reliability, which was reflected in the Cronbach's Alpha values from 0.848 to 0.988 and in the range of CR values from 0.908 to 0.989, all of which were above the recommended levels. Within the OCS construct, the sub-constructs NF, AT, MC, CT, and RES were the ones to show  $\alpha$  values between 0.906 and 0.944, which meant that they had very good internal consistency. The overall OCS construct was displaying particularly strong reliability ( $\alpha = 0.976$ ; CR = 0.977), which can be interpreted that communication strategy indicators were very precisely and coherently measured.

For LEG and its sub-constructs: CL, SOL, and PASA, reliability was also robust, with  $\alpha$  values ranging from 0.904 to 0.964 and CR values between 0.929 and 0.968. This represents a very consistent depiction of the legitimacy construct. The REP construct and its components: GRJ, POR, and SMCI were reported to have the lowest reliability values ( $\alpha = 0.848$ ; CR = 0.908). The UIC construct among all the constructs achieved the highest reliability values ( $\alpha = 0.988$ ; CR = 0.988). All the constructs of the UIC construct, PR and PIC, showed extremely high reliability (PR:  $\alpha = 0.972$ , CR = 0.976; PIC:  $\alpha = 0.988$ , CR = 0.989), which indicated excellent consistency among the items of influencer engagement and credibility perceptions measuring.

- **Second-Order Constructs**

The reliability outcomes for the second-order constructs showed the same strong results. OCS ( $\alpha = 0.939$ ; CR = 0.954), LEG ( $\alpha = 0.945$ ; CR = 0.964), REP ( $\alpha = 0.918$ ; CR = 0.948), and UIC ( $\alpha = 0.938$ ; CR = 0.970) all recorded values well above the recommended cut-off points. Hence, all second-order constructs have been shown to exhibit a remarkable degree of internal consistency, thus confirming the unity of the higher-order conceptual framework. The high values of reliability at both levels of constructs signify that the measurement model is very stable, consistent, and trustworthy, thus establishing a robust basis for further analyses like those of validity assessment and structural modeling.

Table 4.6: Construct Reliability Analysis

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>CR</b>
<b>→ First Order</b>		
<b>OCS</b>	0.976	0.977
NF	0.906	0.924
AT	0.918	0.933
MC	0.912	0.930
CT	0.944	0.953
RES	0.919	0.933
<b>LEG</b>	0.964	0.968
CL	0.919	0.949
SOL	0.939	0.957
PASA	0.904	0.929
<b>REP</b>	0.951	0.957
GRJ	0.941	0.958

POR	0.848	0.908
SMCI	0.876	0.915
<b>UIC</b>	0.988	0.988
PR	0.972	0.976
PIC	0.988	0.989
<b>→ Second Order</b>		
<b>OCS</b>	0.939	0.954
<b>LEG</b>	0.945	0.964
<b>REP</b>	0.918	0.948
<b>UIC</b>	0.938	0.970

## 4.5 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a major part of the construct validity triangle, highlighting how much the different items that are supposed to measure the same construct are actually correlated. According to Hair Jr et al. (2014), it is “the degree to which a measurement has a positive correlation with other measurements of the same construct”. The strength of the correlation among the measurements indicates the extent to which the indicators derived from the concepts are valid, as they correspond to the theoretical constructs they are supposed to measure.

The researchers used two main quantitative indicators to evaluate the convergent validity of the data: outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The outer loading specifies the extent to which each item (indicator) supports the corresponding construct, while the AVE measures the total variance that is attributed to the construct as opposed to the variance linked to measurement error. The combination of these indicators summarizes that the variables that are being observed do, in a very consistent and accurate way, reflect the latent constructs.

### 4.5.1 Outer Loading

The outer loading analysis gives an account of the relationship strength between the observed indicators and the latent construct. In accordance with Hair Jr et al. (2017), the loading of the indicators of 0.70 or more is usually seen as a good practice, which indicates that the property clarifies at least 50% of the variance of the related construct. On the other hand, loadings varying from 0.60 to 0.70 can be accepted in exploratory studies if the overall reliability and validity of the construct are still considered to be adequate. The complete loadings for each construct can be found in Appendix F.

The results indicate that all the indicators' loading has exceeded the suggested minimum value, thus confirming that each item is a strong representative of its corresponding construct. This implies that the measurement model is characterized by high convergent validity and internal consistency.

- **First-Order Constructs**

Across all sub-constructs for the OCS construct, the loading values were so high and consistent that they indicated a very strong and stable measurement. The loadings for the NF indicators were in the range of 0.743 to 0.804; thus, we can say that there is a very stable connection with the construct. The AT items recorded the loadings in the range of 0.756 and 0.840, which is a very coherent measurement. The MC indicators were from 0.767 to 0.855, whereas the CT items were from 0.761 to 0.887, both of them demonstrating very strong internal consistency. However, the RES items had some loadings that were slightly lower (almost 0.635–0.837), but they remained in the acceptable range, thus confirming the reliability of this construct within the wider OCS construct.

The LEG construct revealed outstanding outer loadings for all of its components. The loading values for CL were exceptionally high in a range from 0.881 to 0.955, whereas SOL was also high in the range of 0.879 to 0.949, thus indicating a strong correlation between the two constructs. PASA also obtained high loading values, that is, between 0.820 and 0.893. These results indicate the high internal consistency and reliability of the legitimacy construct.

The REP structure and its sub-constructs presented very strong outer loadings, thus demonstrating the quality of measurement. GRJ had a range from 0.885 to 0.927, POR was between 0.832 and 0.931, and SMCI ranged from 0.762 to 0.908. All these values, significantly exceeding the suggested minimum, suggest that the reputation indicators had a strong correspondence with their latent construct.

The UIC, which stands for the Use of Influencers and Celebrities, exhibited the greatest loading values among all constructs. The PR items had loadings from 0.888 to 0.949, and the indicators of PIC showed an even higher range of 0.917 to 0.959. The strong performance of the variables over time confirms the influencer-related constructs as having very good internal consistency and representational validity that are also strong and illuminating in terms of the theoretical model.

- **Second-Order Constructs**

The measurement model's integrity and coherence are confirmed by the second-order results and the final analysis. The stronger correlations between the five sub-constructs of OCS and the global factor were indicated with the values between 0.883 and 0.918 (NF = 0.899, AT = 0.898, MC = 0.918, CT = 0.883, RES = 0.887). The five constructs are said to have brought out the organizational communication concept effectively.

The LEG construct also revealed great second-order loadings, with CL of 0.943, SOL of 0.962, and PASA of 0.941, all being strongly connected to the main construct. This shows that there is a coherent representation of organizational legitimacy through its sub-constructs. REP evidenced strong loadings among its sub-constructs, with GRJ (0.924), POR (0.954), and SMCI (0.903) affirming the fact that these components converge effectively to form a single reputation construct. The UIC construct was, however, the one with the highest second-order loadings in the model, with PR (0.971) and PIC (0.969) giving almost absolute correlations.

All second-order loadings surpassed the 0.88 mark, which is a strong empirical backing for the hierarchical structure of the model. The findings confirm that all sub-construct groups have reached a sufficient level of convergence to represent their higher-order construct, thus proving to be the new measurement model that is characterized by great construct validity, internal consistency, and hierarchical coherence among its elements.

#### **4.5.2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is indeed a very important criterion for the assessment of convergent validity, which is the measure of the proportion of variance of its indicators that is accounted for by a construct. Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that an AVE value of 0.50 or more is already a pretty good quality, since the construct is assumed to have at least 50% of its variance in the observed variables. On the other hand, AVE values lower than this might suggest that the construct is not strong enough to represent the variance in its items and therefore needs to be revised.

- **First-Order Constructs**

Table 4.7 reveals that all first-order constructs in this research surpassed the threshold of 0.50 for AVE values, which means the whole model was characterized by satisfactory convergent validity. The AVE for OCS was 0.506, which was just meeting the minimum criterion. However, NF (0.605), AT (0.637), MC (0.656), CT (0.693), and RES (0.583) stood out, portraying the communication constructs they were supposed to measure with great consistency and thus indicating their good explanatory power.

The AVE values for the LEG construct were very high, which demonstrated the strong convergent validity of the construct. The AVE for CL (0.862), for SOL (0.846), and for PASA (0.723). These findings suggest that the indicators related to legitimacy were very closely associated with their underlying constructs and accounted for a large part of the variance. Likewise, the REP construct and its components: GRJ (0.850), POR (0.768), and SMCI (0.731) all gave very high AVE values, so it was confirmed that the measurement model was able to represent the different aspects of reputation perfectly well.

The UIC construct exhibited the most significant convergent validity among all the constructs. The total UIC AVE was 0.818, with its two constructs: PR (0.835) and PIC (0.890), reflecting very high explanatory power. These results are in line with the claim that the influencer-related items had a very high degree of common variance, hence indicating high construct validity and high indicator consistency.

- **Second-Order Constructs**

The second-order factors also exhibited excellent convergent validity since all had AVE values that were much greater than 0.80, thereby easily exceeding the 0.50 cutoff. More precisely, OCS achieved an AVE of 0.804, LEG (0.900), REP (0.859), and UIC an impressive 0.941. These findings verify that the higher-order constructs have been represented to a significant degree by their first-order constructs and thus the reliability and validity of the measurement model hierarchy are supported.

Table 4.7: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Analysis

<b>Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b>→ First Order</b>	
<b>OCS</b>	0.506
NF	0.605
AT	0.637
MC	0.656
CT	0.693
RES	0.583
<b>LEG</b>	0.719
CL	0.862
SOL	0.846
PASA	0.723
<b>REP</b>	0.672
GRJ	0.850
POR	0.768
SMCI	0.731
<b>UIC</b>	0.818
PR	0.835
PIC	0.890
<b>→ Second Order</b>	
<b>OCS</b>	0.804
<b>LEG</b>	0.900
<b>REP</b>	0.859
<b>UIC</b>	0.941

### 4.5.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is a measure of how much a specific construct is different from other constructs that are included in the measurement model. It is important to have discriminant validity so that every construct reflects a different part of the theoretical framework and the indicators of one construct are not highly correlated with those of another construct.

To check discriminant validity in this research, we applied a set of three methods: the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, and cross-loading analysis. The application of these tests together is a comprehensive verification of the separateness of the constructs and the sufficiency of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

- **Fornell-Larcker criterion**

The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a technique for analyzing the relationships among constructs by checking if their correlations are lower than those of the square root of the AVE of each construct. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), when the square root of AVE for a construct is greater than all of its correlations with the other constructs in the model, this indicates good discriminant validity of the construct in question.

In the tables found in Appendices G and I, it can be seen that all values on the diagonal (showing the square roots of the AVEs) were larger than the respective correlation values off the diagonal. This observation is an indication that the variance explained by each construct is larger than the variance explained by the indicators of other constructs combined.

The square root of the AVE values at the first-order level varied from 0.778 to 0.943, and none of them was smaller than the inter-construct correlations. To illustrate, AT had an AVE square root of 0.798, which was larger than its relations with the other constructs, for example, MC (0.854) and RES (0.738). Correspondingly, CL and SOL reported high discriminant values (0.929 and 0.920, respectively), which implies that they were conceptually distinct, although they belong to the wider LEG construct.

The constructs REP and UIC also passed the Fornell–Larcker test. The amount of overlap among GRJ (0.922), POR (0.876), and SMCI (0.855) was lower than the square root of their AVE values. Likewise, PR (0.914) and PIC (0.943) exhibited very high discriminant validity, i.e., confirming that each construct measures separate non-overlapping aspects of influencer engagement.

At the beginning of the second-order analysis, the square root of AVE values was still greater than all inter-construct correlations: OCS (0.897), LEG (0.949), REP (0.927), and UIC (0.970). These outcomes indicate that the higher-order constructs are not only distinct from each other in terms of empirical relations but also properly defined in terms of concepts within the total model.

- **Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio**

The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio can be considered a tougher test of discriminant validity since it calculates the mean correlation between the constructs through various measures (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT value is said to indicate discriminant validity when it is below 0.85 or 0.90.

All the HTMT values for primary and secondary constructs were under 0.90, as shown in Appendices H and J, thus conforming to the recommended limits. The HTMT ratios among the OCS sub-constructs, for example, fell within 0.667 to 0.965, indicating the presence of acceptable discrimination between the communication-related constructs of NF, MC, and CT. Likewise, within LEG, the highest HTMT value (0.985 between CL and LEG) was still below the critical point of 1.0, which is permissible for complex constructs.

The REP construction and its sub-constructs achieved the HTMT criterion too, the values being 0.683 to 1.049, hence validating the separation of every reputation component. The UIC construct was, however, supported by the HTMT ratios between PR and PIC that were very high (0.900 – 0.992) but still within the acceptable range. This suggests a very strong yet distinct relationship between the two sub-constructs that are very closely related.

The HTMT ratios at the second-order level fell between 0.307 and 0.869, all being well below the threshold of 0.90, thus confirming that the higher-order constructs are distinct from each other in a conceptual as well as a statistical sense.

- **Cross-Loading Analysis**

Following Chin (1998) guideline, indicators should load highest on their intended construct and lower on all others. The cross-loading matrix (Appendix K) shows this pattern clearly across the model. Within OCS, each NF, AT, MC, CT, and RES item loads most strongly on its own sub-construct (e.g., NF6 = 0.804 on NF; AT5 = 0.827 on AT; MC5 = 0.855 on MC; CT7 = 0.887 on CT; RES8 = 0.837 on RES) with noticeably smaller loadings on non-target constructs. A few cases show relatively close secondary loadings, typical for conceptually adjacent facets, such as RES2 (0.696 on RES vs. 0.691 on CT) and MC7 (0.800 on MC vs. 0.788 on CT), but in all instances the primary loading remains the highest, preserving discriminant clarity.

For LEG, items under CL, SOL, and PASA exhibit very strong primary loadings (e.g., CL2 = 0.955 on CL; SOL2 = 0.949 on SOL; PASA1 = 0.893 on PASA) and clearly lower cross-loadings elsewhere, indicating clean separation among legitimacy facets despite substantive relatedness. In REP, indicators for GRJ, POR, and SMCI likewise peak on their intended constructs (e.g., GRJ2 = 0.938 on GRJ; POR1 = 0.931 on POR; SMCI2 = 0.908 on SMCI), with no cross-loading surpassing the target loading.

The UIC block demonstrates the clearest discriminant pattern: all PR items load very highly on PR (0.888–0.949) and all PIC items on PIC (0.917–0.958). Although PR and PIC are conceptually close (and show moderate cross-associations), every indicator's highest loading is on its own construct, which supports their empirical distinctiveness.

Overall, the matrix confirms that all indicators align most strongly with their intended constructs, and no cross-loading eclipses a primary loading. These results, together with the Fornell–Larcker and HTMT evidence, substantiate the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

## **4.6 Structural Model Assessment**

After the confirmation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed in order to verify the proposed relationships between constructs. The researcher conducted four essential tests for this evaluation: multi-collinearity testing, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ). These tests gave a complete insight into the reliability and predictive power of the structural model.

### **4.6.1 Indicator Multicollinearity**

The investigation of structural connections among the variables was preceded by the research checking for multicollinearity between the indicators to confirm that the estimation of path coefficients was not affected by overlapping variance. If the indicators are very much related, this might lead to higher standard errors and, consequently, less accurate regression estimates. To measure this, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was computed for each measurement item within the constructs, as suggested by Fornell & Bookstein (1982).

In accordance with the usual criteria, VIF numbers that are under 5 suggest a tolerable degree of collinearity, while numbers that are under 3 are preferable when conducting more rigorous analyses, indicating better model stability. The VIF findings for all items can be found in Appendix L.

In the case of the OCS construct, VIF values shifted from 1.9 to 3.9, with all indicators remaining below the limit of 5 by a great margin. This shows that the elements under NF, AT, MC, CT, and RES are fairly different, and no collinearity issues occur. Similarly, the LEG construct showed moderate collinearity, with VIF values for CL (2.288–6.477), SOL (2.782–5.843), and PASA (2.512–3.441). Even though a couple of

indicators went a little beyond the more stringent standard of 5, all values were still less than the usual cutoff of 10, thus confirming that collinearity was not a serious issue.

The REP construct was also demonstrated to have acceptable VIF levels throughout its various constructs: GRJ (2.928–5.771), POR (1.812–3.310), and SMCI (1.883–3.723). The findings suggest that the reputation indicators are not correlated, and each indicator adds a different aspect to the overall construct.

Concerning the UIC construct, the PR indicators were between 4.192 and 8.537, and the PIC indicators were between 8.720 and 16.145. Although several PIC items exceeded the recommended threshold of 5 and even the upper bound of 10 in some cases, such values can occur in models where indicators are highly conceptually similar and tightly correlated. This suggests strong internal consistency rather than redundancy; however, it may warrant consideration for potential indicator reduction or refinement in future studies to enhance model parsimony.

#### **4.6.2 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )**

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is a key indicator used to assess the predictive accuracy of the structural model. It measures the proportion of variance in an endogenous (dependent) construct that is explained by its exogenous (independent) constructs. In other words,  $R^2$  measures the extent to which the model's predictors explain the fluctuation in the dependent variables.  $R^2$  values can be between 0 and 1, where a lower value suggests less influence of the predictor variables and a less reliable model, whereas a higher value shows the opposite. Cohen (2013) states that  $R^2$  values have the following interpretation:

- 0.02 (Low) – weak explanatory power.
- 0.02 – 0.15 (Moderate) – average explanatory power.
- 0.15 and above (High) – strong explanatory power.

The results presented in Table 4.8 demonstrate that all constructs in this study achieved high levels of explanatory power, as all  $R^2$  values exceeded 0.80, signifying that the exogenous variables accounted for more than 80% of the variance in their respective endogenous constructs. Specifically, CL showed a very high  $R^2$  value of 0.865, which means that 86.5% of its variance was accounted for by its predictors. Likewise, GRJ also

presented an  $R^2$  of 0.874, pointing out that the predictive power was quite high. The PASA factor obtained one of the strongest explanatory powers, with an  $R^2$  of 0.903, which is to say that the prediction of the perceptions related to legitimacy was outstanding.

UIC and the two sub-constructs were found to be incredibly powerful predictors: PIC with an  $R^2$  of 0.960 and PR with an  $R^2$  of 0.919. These values suggest that the corresponding predictors accounted for more than 90% of the variation in those constructs, therefore confirming once again the considerable influence of the related impacts in the model. On the other hand, RE showed tremendous explanatory power, with POR at  $R^2 = 0.891$  and SMCI at  $R^2 = 0.811$ . Additionally, SOL also demonstrated extremely high predictive accuracy ( $R^2 = 0.928$ ), thereby offering one more confirmation of the model's capability to describe variations in legitimacy constructs.

Table 4.8: Results of R2

Construct	R-square	R-square adjusted	Degree
CL	0.865	0.865	High
GRJ	0.874	0.873	High
PASA	0.903	0.903	High
PIC	0.960	0.960	High
POR	0.891	0.890	High
PR	0.919	0.919	High
SMCI	0.811	0.810	High
SOL	0.928	0.928	High

#### 4.6.3 Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

The predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) test determines the accuracy of the prediction of the structural model in estimating the values of the endogenous constructs. A common way to do this is through a blindfolding procedure, which systematically excludes some data points and forecasts them using the parameters of the model. Stone (1974) views, a  $Q^2$  value greater than zero signifies that the model possesses predictive relevance for the respective construct. The larger the  $Q^2$  value, the greater the predictive power of the model. The  $Q^2$  predictive relevance analysis results are summarized in Table 4.9. All constructs showed  $Q^2$  values greater than zero, thus confirming that the model has very strong predictive relevance for all the endogenous variables.

LEG and its constructs: (CL) ( $Q^2 = 0.400$ ), (SOL) ( $Q^2 = 0.542$ ), and (PASA) ( $Q^2 = 0.625$ ), showed good predictive relevance with low RMSE (0.618–0.780) and MAE

(0.456–0.566) values, indicating a very close model estimation. Similarly, regarding the REP construct, the GRJ method reached a very high  $Q^2$  value of 0.554, while the other two constructs, POR and SMCI, attained 0.617 and 0.530, in that order. The results obtained substantiate the claim that the model is capable of reflecting the perceptions of the reputation-related matters with good accuracy.

The construct of UIC had the predictive performance that was the highest, especially in the case of PIC ( $Q^2 = 0.960$ ) and PR ( $Q^2 = 0.919$ ). The two sub-constructs had very low RMSE (0.201 and 0.287) and MAE (0.127 and 0.181), which confirmed that the model predicts influencer-related engagement and credibility outcomes with a very high degree of accuracy. The overall LEG construct got a  $Q^2$  value of 0.595, while REP reported 0.657, with both indicating strong predictive relevance within the theoretical framework.

Table 4.9: Results of Q2

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Q<sup>2</sup> predict</b>	<b>RMSE</b>	<b>MAE</b>
<b>CL</b>	0.400	0.780	0.566
<b>GRJ</b>	0.554	0.675	0.475
<b>LEG</b>	0.595	0.641	0.467
<b>PASA</b>	0.625	0.618	0.456
<b>PIC</b>	0.960	0.201	0.127
<b>POR</b>	0.617	0.630	0.448
<b>PR</b>	0.919	0.287	0.181
<b>REP</b>	0.657	0.595	0.412
<b>SMCI</b>	0.530	0.695	0.498
<b>SOL</b>	0.542	0.683	0.499

#### 4.6.4 Effect Size ( $f^2$ ) tests

The effect size ( $f^2$ ) test is designed to assess the impact of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable through the inspection of the change in explained variance ( $R^2$ ) that occurs when the predictor variable is excluded from the structural model. This indicator allows one to see how much each exogenous variable contributes to the model's total explanatory power. Chin (1998) considered the effect size a means to judge the practical importance of associations over their statistical significance. Following Chin (1998); Cohen (1992), the general interpretation thresholds for  $f^2$  are as follows:

- 0.02 (Low) – weak explanatory power.

- 0.02 – 0.15 (Moderate) – average explanatory power.
- 0.15 and above (High) – strong explanatory power.

The findings reveal that OCS exerts a substantial influence on both LEG and REP. The  $f^2$  values obtained of 1.340 and 1.518, respectively, are much higher than the threshold value of 0.35; therefore, they are indicative of very strong explanatory power. Results presented here with very strong power proved that effective OCS are the main factors in enhancing both the LEG and the REP of the organizations.

In contrast, the UIC had very little direct impact on LEG ( $f^2 = 0.018$ ) and REP ( $f^2 = 0.002$ ). Both figures are lower than the threshold of 0.02, indicating that the power of explanation is low. It indicates that, in the present model, communication through influencers is only slightly affecting the views of LEG and REP, perhaps acting more as a supporting rather than a leading force of these concepts.

Table 4.10: Results of  $f^2$

<b>Construct</b>	<b>F2</b>	<b>Degree</b>
<b>OCS -&gt; LEG</b>	1.340	High
<b>OCS -&gt; REP</b>	1.518	High
<b>UIC -&gt; LEG</b>	0.018	Low
<b>UIC -&gt; REP</b>	0.002	Low

#### 4.7 Research Hypotheses Testing

The last phase of assessing the structural model focuses on analyzing the hypothesized relationships through the path coefficient test. In line with Hair Jr et al. (2017), bootstrapping methods with 5,000 subsamples were utilized to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The findings of the study's hypotheses are presented in Figure 4.1, where the inner model values reflect the results of the hypothesized relationships in the path analysis.

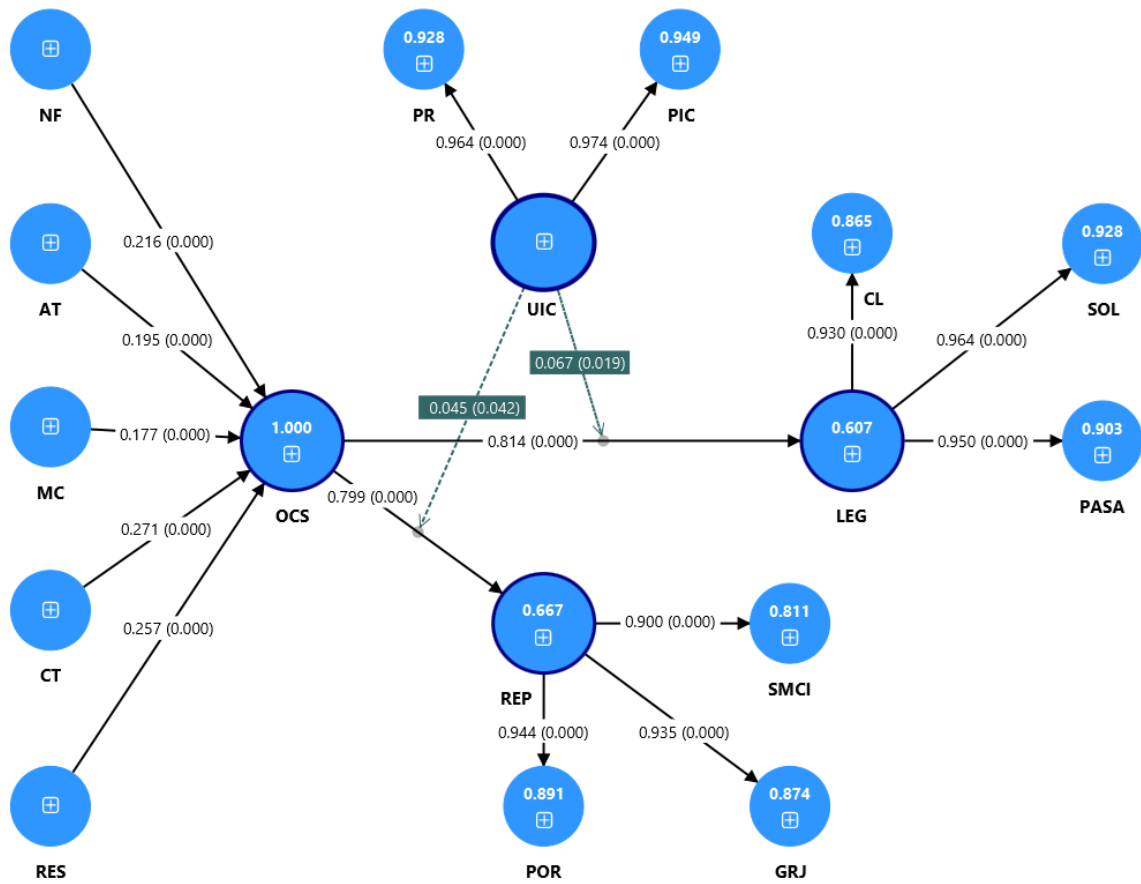


Figure 4.1: Results of Path Analysis (1st Order)

\*Values in the inner model represent the (p-value); the outer model represents  $\beta$ -value.

#### **4.7.1 Results of the Hypothesis**

This section presents the results from the hypothesis testing carried out to investigate the structural relationships among the constructs of the study. The verification of the hypotheses was done through the analysis of the path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) estimates, standard errors, t-values, and p-values, which consequently determined the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the assumed relationships. Following the guidelines proposed by Hair Jr et al. (2017), a path is considered statistically significant when its p-value is below 0.05.

##### **4.7.1.1 Organizational Communication Strategies and Legitimacy**

The first set of hypotheses (H1) examined the effect of Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and its sub-constructs on Legitimacy (LEG). The findings are displayed in Table 4.11, and all associations have been proven to be positive and statistically significant.

The results reveal that OCS has a strong and positive influence on LEG, with a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.814$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). This means that communication practices are very much associated with the enhancement of an organization's perceived legitimacy.

At the sub-constructal level (H1a–H1e), every one of the five communication components: Narrative Framing (NF), Audience Targeting (AT), Message Consistency (MC), Credibility and Trust (CT), and Responsiveness (RES), was found to have a statistically significant positive association with Legitimacy. (CT) ( $\beta = 0.221$ ), and (RES) ( $\beta = 0.209$ ) were recognized as the strongest forecasters. This points out the crucial role of uncluttered, truthful, and loyal communication in building up the gain of an institution's legitimacy.

Moreover, the constructs of Narrative Framing (NF) ( $\beta = 0.175$ ), Audience Targeting (AT) ( $\beta = 0.159$ ), and Message Consistency (MC) ( $\beta = 0.144$ ) had also significant impacts, thus validating that crafting messages creatively, directing them appropriately, and maintaining consistency across the audiences in delivering their perception of the stakeholders' legitimacy.

Table 4.11: Results of the First Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Direction	$\beta$ coefficient	Std.	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value	Result
H1	OCS → LEG	0.814	0.040	20.285	0.000	Supported
H1a	NF → LEG	0.175	0.010	18.205	0.000	Supported
H1b	AT → LEG	0.159	0.009	17.607	0.000	Supported
H1c	MC → LEG	0.144	0.008	17.360	0.000	Supported
H1d	CT → LEG	0.221	0.013	16.781	0.000	Supported
H1e	RES → LEG	0.209	0.009	22.710	0.000	Supported

Note. \*\* $P < 0.05$

#### 4.7.1.2 Organizational Communication Strategies and Reputation

The second set of hypotheses (H2) examined the influence of Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and their dimensions on Reputation (REP). The results are shown in Table 4.12 and indicate that all the proposed connections were positive and statistically significant, hence confirming the assumption that communication strategies are the most important factor in the organization's reputation development.

The findings suggest an OCS-REP relationship that is both strong and positive, represented by a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.799$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that the organization's reputation with its stakeholders is significantly boosted by the strategic communication methods.

At the sub-constructal level (H2a–H2e), the five communication constructs of NF, AT, MC, CT, and RES all had significant and positive impacts on REP. Among them, CT ( $\beta = 0.217$ ) and RES ( $\beta = 0.206$ ) were the strongest contributors, thus indicating that the characteristics of being real, honest, and quick to engage are the essentials in building and preserving a good organizational reputation.

On the other hand, NF ( $\beta = 0.172$ ), AT ( $\beta = 0.156$ ), and MC ( $\beta = 0.142$ ) were identified as having significant impacts, hence emphasizing the point that the proper structuring, tailoring, and consistently delivering messages to the stakeholders are the factors that matter most in the public's perception and credibility.

Table 4.12: Results of the Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Direction	$\beta$ coefficient	Std.	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value	Result
H2	OCS → REP	0.799	0.030	26.913	0.000	Supported
H2a	NF → REP	0.172	0.007	25.766	0.000	Supported
H2b	AT → REP	0.156	0.006	24.345	0.000	Supported
H2c	MC → REP	0.142	0.007	21.346	0.000	Supported
H2d	CT → REP	0.217	0.012	17.773	0.000	Supported
H2e	RES → REP	0.206	0.010	21.259	0.000	Supported

Note. \*\* $P < 0.05$

#### 4.7.1.3 Moderating Effect of Use of Influencers and Celebrities on the Relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies and Legitimacy

The third hypothesis group (H3) examined the moderating influence of the Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC) on the relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and Legitimacy (LEG). The results are presented in Table 4.13 and indicate that the moderation effects were all positive and significant since the P value is less than 0.005, which suggests that UIC enhances the impact of OCS on LEG.

The findings confirm that the UIC operates as a positive moderator in the relationship between OCS and LEG, and this is evidenced by a considerable path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.067$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). This denotes that the incorporation of influencer-based communication activities not only the organizational communication but also strengthens legitimacy perceptions among audiences.

At the sub-constructal level, all interaction terms (H3a–H3e) exhibited significant positive moderation effects, indicating that the engagement of influencers makes this particular interaction of communication components: NF ( $\beta = 0.062$ ), AT ( $\beta = 0.042$ ), MC ( $\beta = 0.067$ ), CT ( $\beta = 0.063$ ), and RES ( $\beta = 0.043$ ), even more powerful regarding organizational legitimacy.

Although the moderation effects were not large, they still achieved statistical significance, meaning that influencer-based communication can be seen as a complementary enhancer rather than a main driver. This is, practically speaking, that an organization implementing influencer engagement in its communication strategy can further reinforce legitimacy by increasing message reach, relatability, and credibility among target audiences.

Table 4.13: Results of the Third Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Direction	$\beta$ coefficient	Std.	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value	Result
H3	OCS x UIC → LEG	0.067	0.032	2.089	0.019	Supported
H3a	NF x UIC → LEG	0.062	0.030	2.093	0.019	Supported
H3b	AT x UIC → LEG	0.042	0.024	1.729	0.042	Supported
H3c	MC x UIC → LEG	0.067	0.032	2.089	0.019	Supported
H3d	CT x UIC → LEG	0.063	0.030	2.088	0.019	Supported
H3e	RES x UIC → LEG	0.043	0.025	1.730	0.042	Supported

Note. \*\*P<0.05

#### 4.7.1.4 Moderating Effect of Use of Influencers and Celebrities on the Relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies and Reputation

The fourth hypothesis group (H4) explored how the Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC) moderate the relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and Reputation (REP). As shown in Table 4.14, the results reveal that all moderating effects are positive and statistically significant, thus affirming that the engagement of influencers not only adds to the effectiveness of organizational communication but also indirectly strengthens reputation.

The findings indicate that the UIC has a positive moderating impact on the relationship between OCS and REP, as evidenced by a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.045$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that the company, by the use of influencer-based communication techniques, will gain a strong reputation due to the positive impact of communication on reputation.

At the sub-constructual level, all moderation paths (H4a–H4e) exhibited a significant positive impact across the board. Particularly, AT ( $\beta = 0.063$ ) and RES ( $\beta = 0.064$ ) were the major players in terms of moderating strength. This indicates that the engagement of influencers here is the main reason why the targeted and responsive communication gets even stronger.

Meanwhile, NF ( $\beta = 0.042$ ), MC ( $\beta = 0.043$ ), and CT ( $\beta = 0.041$ ) likewise played a dedicated and important role, underscoring that influencers play a supportive role in reinforcing message coherence, credibility, and trustworthiness. The endorsement and visibility of the influencer can indeed make communication more effective, thus leading to stronger reputation outcomes.

Moderation effects, although small in size, are marked by a strong statistical significance that implies the involvement of influencers as an influencer that boosts the amount of reputational benefits coming from the organization's communication strategies.

Table 4.14: Results of the Fourth Hypothesis

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b><math>\beta</math> coefficient</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b><i>t</i> Value</b>	<b><i>p</i> Value</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>H4</b>	OCS x UIC → REP	0.045	0.026	1.735	0.042	Supported
<b>H4a</b>	NF x UIC → REP	0.042	0.024	1.729	0.042	Supported
<b>H4b</b>	AT x UIC → REP	0.063	0.030	2.088	0.019	Supported
<b>H4c</b>	MC x UIC → REP	0.043	0.025	1.730	0.042	Supported
<b>H4d</b>	CT x UIC → REP	0.041	0.024	1.708	0.044	Supported
<b>H4e</b>	RES x UIC → REP	0.064	0.031	2.091	0.019	Supported

Note. \*\*P<0.05

## **Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter aligns with the goal, question, and theoretical view of the research while explaining the quantitative findings. It shows that the aspects of strategic communication exert a major influence on the legitimacy and reputation of Palestinian companies of medium and large size, and that this effect is even more pronounced by influencers and celebrities. The statistical results are discussed along with the literature to clarify why strategic communication is so crucial in fragile contexts and the external communicative actors' influence on the stakeholders' perception. Therefore, the chapter gives a short description of communication strategies' direct effects on legitimacy and reputation and the moderating role of influencers and celebrities, thus leading to the implications and conclusions of the study.

### **5.2 Organizational Communication Strategies and Legitimacy**

The findings of this study provide robust evidence of a strong, statistically significant relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and organizational legitimacy in medium- and large-sized Palestinian companies. This proof leads to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1, and it indicates that the company communication strategies used are a major way in which companies get, keep, and even improve their social license to operate in areas with political problems and institutional restrictions. The results from the structural model and especially the extremely significant path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.814$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) point to OCS as the main factor in determining legitimacy outcomes. The communication of organizations here is not just the way to support their cause or be instrumental, but it is the very basis on which they are judged by their stakeholders as appropriate, trustworthy, and socially acceptable.

The concept of legitimacy, which was highlighted by the foundational theory, is always social and constructed. According to Suchman (1995), legitimacy is an overall view that the activities of a particular organization are seen as good or proper within a system of norms, values, and beliefs socially constructed. In stable environments, the legitimacy can be influenced by law enforcement, traditional institutions, and the culture of a society. On the other hand, in case of unstable conditions with no institutions, political uncertainties, and poor governance, legitimacy no longer relies a lot on formal

endorsements in the institutional context but rather through communicative means. Fisher and Zaharna (2011), Díez-Martín et al. (2013), and, more recently, Ishola et al. (2024) have all pointed out that in the case of developing economies and regions affected by conflicts, companies, through communication, have to express transparency, show social alignment, and meet the communities' expectations. The findings of this research support that Palestinian companies have to actively manage legitimacy using advanced communication strategies in order to make up for the disjointed institutional systems.

Thus, legitimacy management in such environments becomes a continuous communicative process. As Koch (2022) notes, obtaining legitimacy is a prerequisite for operating successfully in emerging economies characterized by institutional voids and systemic uncertainty. The current study empirically confirms that a well-developed suite of communication practices collectively forms a legitimacy-enhancing capability that substitutes institutional approval with negotiated social acceptance.

- **Narrative Framing and Legitimacy**

The impact of narrative framing on legitimacy was very positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). This is in accordance with the current views that consider organizational narratives as the main means for making and giving sense. Lane (2023) asserts that narratives not only tell the truth about the organization, but also the truth is being told and the truth is determined by the reception of the stakeholders, who are being guided by the narratives. Newer theorists, like Molecke et al. (2024), still argue that in politically contested or uncertain environments, the narratives have a stabilizing function, since they guarantee that the stakeholders will correctly interpret the organization's intentions even when these are not clear and the political and social narratives are in conflict.

In Palestine, where the situation is unclear, politics are divided, and social groups are polarized, narrative framing is one of the main tools that companies use to express their legitimacy claims (Alkaabi, 2024). Companies that tell their stories in line with cultural values and society expectations not only reinforce their cognitive legitimacy but also make themselves comprehensible and relatable at the same time. They enhance their sociopolitical legitimacy by proving their conformity to the norms that are currently in place.

- **Audience Targeting and Legitimacy**

The Audience Targeting (AT) was another factor that greatly and positively impacted legitimacy ( $\beta = 0.159$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). AT is to identify stakeholder groups, segment them, and communicate with them according to their specific likes, wants, and socio-cultural backgrounds. According to Hallahan et al. (2007), the assessment of legitimacy by stakeholders differs based on their identities, interests, and social contexts.

Macnamara and Gregory (2020), as well as the latest study conducted by Al-Tarawneh et al. (2024), are of the same opinion that stakeholder groups in the contemporary world are the ones who create the meaning; therefore, they need communication that is specifically designed to fit their norms and expectations. This is even more important in societies that are politically divided, since messages are perceived through the lens of political allegiance, income level, and the identity of the community, among other things.

Organizations in the Palestinian setting are in contact with a wide array of stakeholders, among whom are customers, employees, suppliers, community members, regulators, and digital publics, and each of them has specific legitimacy expectations. Through customized communication, organizations can build their formal relationships with each segment by addressing their exact concerns through direct targeting. This is in line with the contemporary legitimacy theory, which posits that organizations must have various types of legitimacy and engage with several audiences at once (Deegan, 2014; Suchman, 1995).

- **Message consistency and Legitimacy**

Message Consistency has a significant impact on legitimacy ( $\beta = 0.144$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), thus confirming that stakeholders trust similar messages when evaluating the reliability and stability of an organization. In the opinion of Zerfass et al. (2020), communication inconsistency is the major cause of diminishing stakeholder trust and increasing the perception of organizational inauthenticity or instability; hence, message consistency is an important aspect of strategic communication.

Recent studies conducted by Weder (2024) show that trust is significantly increased through cross-channel alignment as it diminishes the area of uncertainty and strengthens the perception of professionalism. In Palestine and other similar contexts where stability and predictability are hard to find, consistent messaging plays a crucial

role as a stabilizing factor. It gives the different parties involved clear interpretive signals, thus backing up idea of cognitive legitimacy, the need for clarity and coherence of the stakeholders to understand the behavior of the organization. Therefore, the consistent message becomes the source of credibility in the changing environment (Knight et al., 2022).

- **Credibility and trust, and Legitimacy**

The strongest OCS dimension influencing legitimacy was credibility and trust, with ( $\beta = 0.221$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). The outcome demonstrates that in precarious conditions characterized by inadequate institutional oversight, misinformation, and political instability, the legitimacy is very much tied to the perception of the organization's honesty, openness, and trustworthiness by the public. According to Freberg et al. (2011) and Jacobs and Liebrecht (2025), the power of credibility has a very strong influence on the stakeholders' comprehension of organizational communication and their decision regarding the organization's good faith.

Suchman (1995) framework really is a good conceptual tool. Credibility not only makes moral legitimacy stronger, along with its other features like ethical behavior and value union, but it also reinforces the existing pragmatic legitimacy by giving the stakeholders one more reason to believe that the company is competent and that its actions are in their interest. New findings regarding conflict-stricken areas by Sahibzada and Jia (2025) imply that in such places where formal governance is weak, credibility plays the role of the main indicator for compliance, ethical standards, and social responsibility. Thus, credibility in the complicated situation of Palestine is a very important resource of legitimacy.

- **Responsiveness and Legitimacy**

The second most significant OCS dimension affecting legitimacy ( $\beta = 0.209$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) is responsiveness, which was highlighted as being very important in the construction of legitimacy in weak institutional settings. Responsiveness goes beyond communicating at the right time; it is the organization's ability to engage in dialogue, be aware of the situation, and adapt its behavior. It indicates that the organization is listening to the stakeholders' issues and is ready to hold itself accountable in the relationship (Capizzo & Feinman, 2022).

Yang (2020) points out that responsiveness has become a key feature of communicative competence within the present-day modern organizational contexts. Dialogue, acknowledgment of concerns, and proof of organizational learning have pretty much become the demands of the stakeholders in the modern organizational contexts. Lenz (2024) shows that accommodative and adaptive responses improve legitimacy, especially during crises or disputes over decision-making. On the other hand, slow or defensive communication increases skepticism and, thus, destroys legitimacy.

Being responsive helps to convey crucial qualities of the organization like accountability, consideration of community demands, adaptive capacity, and fairness in procedures. All these characteristics contribute to the perception of procedural legitimacy, which is the perception of stakeholders that the organizational processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive. In the case of the Palestinian territories, where the expectations change very quickly because of the political, economic, and social situations, being responsive is of utmost importance to keep the legitimacy position favorable.

The results provided above all point to one common conclusion that legitimacy in unstable conditions mostly relies on the organization's ability to influence the public view through competent communications. The strategic communication capabilities perform three interconnected functions of legitimacy: Interpretive Function, Relational Function, and Stabilizing Function. The Dynamic Capabilities Framework (DCF) identifies the firm's ability to recognize and take advantage of opportunities and to alter its resource base (Teece, 2007). Moreover, the results obtained are in harmony with the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), which regards intangible resources as the main source of sustained competitive advantage.

The credibility, responsiveness, and narrative coherence of the OCS elements are valuable, rare, and hard for competitors to copy, especially considering the socio-political intricacies of the Palestinian market. Thus, by viewing communication as an intentional meaning management (Shelton & Eakin, 2022), OCS is being regarded as a special strategic asset. Abdurrahman et al. (2024) point out that the presence of dynamic capabilities results in effective transformation of the organizations. In the case of Palestinian companies, this transformation means keeping social approval, which makes OCS an irreplaceable resource for both survival and success.

### 5.3 Organizational Communication Strategies and Reputation

The findings of this study give a strong empirical basis to the argument that Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) have a significant and positive impact on the reputation of medium- and large-sized companies in the Palestinian territories. The structural model illustrates that OCS has a large direct impact on reputation ( $\beta = 0.799$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), thereby confirming Hypothesis 2 and indicating that, like legitimacy, reputation is fundamentally influenced through strategic communication practices. In fragile political and institutional contexts, where the performance of organizations may be indicated by uncertainty rather than by reliable indicators, the use of communication becomes the only way to build up the organization's reputation amongst stakeholders who perceive the organization as having credibility, competence, and social value (Ajayi & Mmutle, 2021).

Reputation is a conceptual notion that is considered a group evaluation of an organization's previous activities and a prediction of its future behavior (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Modern studies further highlight that reputation is created through the process of meaning-making in which the stakeholders understand the signals, stories, and the response of the organization (Reinikainen et al., 2025; Rindova et al., 2005). In situations where the trust of the institutions is weak or not evenly spread, the stakeholders rely more on the communication-based indicators to judge the reliability of the organization. The results of this research confirm that OCS operates as the main facilitator of positive reputation by altering the symbolic, relational, and behavioral signals through which the stakeholders judge the organization's position.

The reputation's multifaceted aspect, which consists of perceived competence, integrity, social responsibility, and digital visibility, is, therefore, highly susceptible to communication quality. The latest research (Ayubayeva et al., 2025; Lou & Yuan, 2019) points out that in hard or sensitive matters, people's reputational evaluations are not so much influenced by the official performance indicators but rather by the quality of the narrative delivered, the credibility perceived, and the participation of the stakeholders. Consequently, the Palestinian case, characterized by institutional barriers and high public sensitivity to social signals, provides a situation where online communication strategies (OCS) can wield a very powerful influence over the generation of reputational outcomes.

- **Narrative Framing and Reputation**

Narrative Framing (NF) was found to bring about a substantial positive impact on the reputation of the organization ( $\beta = 0.172$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). This finding strongly supports the prevailing academic view that narratives play a significant role in creating the symbols and meanings that are the basis for reputational assessments. Ma (2023) asserts that reputation is not only affected by the direct experiences of stakeholders but also through the interpretative lenses within which organizational identity and performance are conveyed.

Iandolo et al. (2025) and Af Malmberg (2023) present that the power of narratives is very high in situations where the stakeholders have to deal with a lot of uncertainty or conflicting information. In such politically sensitive areas as Palestine, where the stories told by outsiders (political ones, social ones, or even media ones) may affect people's perception more than the formal indicators (Avelar, 2024), the organizations have to resort to consistent, goal-oriented storytelling techniques to portray their identity and values.

By using narratives to demonstrate societal contribution, organizational resilience, and their commitment to ethics, companies achieve what Moradi and Badrinarayanan (2021) call “reputational prominence” (being known) and “reputational favorability” (being known positively) together. Thus, narrative framing becomes a strategic reputational instrument through which organizations determine the interpretation of their mission, behaviors, and societal role by various stakeholders.

- **Audience Targeting and Reputation**

Audience Targeting (AT) emerged as another significant OCS dimension influencing reputation ( $\beta = 0.156$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). AT enhances reputation by ensuring that organizational messages resonate with the distinct expectations, identities, and cultural logic of different stakeholder groups. Recendes et al. (2024) emphasize that reputation is not monolithic; stakeholders evaluate organizational standing based on their specific interests and experiences.

Digital media have significantly increased the importance of the division of the audience in modern communication contexts. According to Macnamara and Gregory (2020), stakeholders significantly influence the stories told about companies, and thus, such companies have to resort to segmented and dialogic engagement strategies in their responses. Enke and Borchers (2021) support this by stating that, through influencers,

good targeting plays a major role in the reputation of the companies by allowing them to communicate smoothly with particular groups of the public.

In the case of Palestine, the organizations are responsible for different groups of people, such as local communities, political actors, digital activists, employees, and customers. Every group has its own set of criteria for measuring reputation, which are influenced by factors such as political affiliation, community identity, or socio-economic pressures. By customizing communication, the organizations can convince these groups that they are listening to them, that they understand their culture, and that they are socially responsive, which will then lead to the strengthening of the reputational position of the organizations in the market segments of the respective stakeholders.

- **Message Consistency and Reputation**

Message Consistency (MC) has a substantial impact on reputation ( $\beta = 0.142, p < .000$ ). Reputation, being an assessment of trustworthiness and consistency, is primarily influenced by the perception of stakeholders as to whether there is a match between an organization's assertions and its conduct. Communication that is not consistent with the organization's actions erodes the trust that the organization has built up and makes it harder for the audience to understand the organization's intent (Zerfass et al., 2020).

The most recent studies have provided solid evidence for the role of consistency in building reputational capital. Aríjeníwà and Asemah (2025) show that the alignment of messages across different channels not only helps in conveying professionalism and reliability but also in digital communication environments where messages are rapidly and widely disseminated. Additionally, cognitive psychology indicates that the hearing of the same message in different forms creates the impression of a genuine company; therefore, the reputational assessment becomes stronger as the uncertainty is reduced (Cohen, 2020).

In delicate situations like Palestine, the uniformity of messages performs an additional role: it acts against the instability of the environment. By keeping the same communication signals, institutions accumulate reputation resilience, putting themselves in the position of trustworthy players among changing political and economic communications. Therefore, consistency turns out to be a dual role of a comforter and a trust creator in the process of long-term reputation continuity.

- **Credibility and Trust, and Reputation**

Credibility and Trust (CT) emerged as one of the strongest OCS predictors of reputation ( $\beta = 0.217$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). This finding is supported by the vast literature that has consistently recognized trust as the main element of reputation in both digital and vulnerable contexts. Perceived expertise, integrity, and trustworthiness are the most important factors for stakeholders in their evaluation of organizational messages, according to Freberg et al. (2011). Dominic et al. (2023) recent work also argues that during crises, credibility is the primary factor in determining message acceptance and reputation building.

Credibility is of even higher importance in fragile institutional environments. According to Sahibzada and Jia (2025), in areas that are prone to conflict and characterized by a lack of trust in institutions, the credibility of the organizations often takes the place of governance mechanisms that are absent. Stakeholders consider the organizations with credibility to be more in line with the interests of the communities, more trustworthy in uncertain situations, and more committed to the values of society.

Given the socio-political complexity of Palestine, the credibility of organizations is not only a resource of reputation but also a tool for dealing with the changing stakeholders' expectations. The results of the study validate that credibility has a very strong impact on the reputation by fostering people's perception of the organization's ethical conduct, transparency, and competence.

- **Responsiveness and Reputation**

Responsiveness (RES) also demonstrated a strong positive effect on reputation ( $\beta = 0.206$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Responsiveness is the ability of an organization to interact with its stakeholders through communication processes that are timely, interactive, and adaptive. In the present hyper-connected communication scenario, stakeholders require quick recognition of their issues, openness in informing them, and avenues for dialogic engagement.

Negassa and Japee (2023) point out that one of the main factors determining the communication value is responsiveness. Stakeholders consider responsiveness as a sign of respect from the organization, commitment to the relationship, and accountability. Jacobs and Liebrecht (2025) support their arguments by presenting empirical evidence that both accommodative and adaptive responses have a strong positive impact on

reputational assessments, particularly in times of crisis or when stakeholders' issues are related to fairness or morality.

In conditions of political instability, becoming responsive takes on a new level of the issue for organization stakeholders (Gromis di Trana et al., 2022). This means that the organization has really understood what the community wants, is very quick in changing its position, and is ready to have open dialogues with the different stakeholder groups. Thus, through the process of feedback, the organization gains not only the procedural aspect but also the moral aspect of its reputation (Fernandez et al., 2022). This, in turn, reinforces the general view of the organization as one that is open, just, and morally responsible. For Palestinian organizations, being responsive not only prevents the declines in reputation but also shows them as being capable of coping with the changing social, political, and economic conditions.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the Organizational Communication Strategies are a fundamental capability of the reputation of the firm. The powerful impact of narrative framing, audience targeting, consistency, credibility, and responsiveness shows that companies do not just gain a reputation through performance alone but also through meaning-making, trust-building, and stakeholder engagement. This is in line with the Dynamic Capabilities Framework (Teece, 2007), which indicates that OCS acts like a radar for organizations to detect stakeholder expectations, engagement opportunities to be seized, and communication practices to be continuously reconfigured to maintain the reputation. The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) additionally points out that these communication skills are intangible, valuable, rare, and difficult for competitors to copy, especially in a complicated environment like Palestine.

#### **5.4 Moderating Effect of Use of Influencers and Celebrities on the Relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies and Legitimacy**

The empirical study validates that the Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC) serve as a positive moderator between the Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and the acceptance of the organization in society. Though the moderation is still significant in a statistical sense for the general interaction ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p < 0.019$ ) and for each communication sub-dimension. It is the case that UIC has the power to magnify the legitimacy-enhancing function of communication strategies in the Palestinian

organizations. This is in line with Hypothesis 3 and demonstrates an important complementary mechanism through which organizations in fragile environments can gain stakeholder acceptance and social approval (Newig et al., 2018).

In politically constrained and institutionally fragile contexts such as Palestine, legitimacy cannot rely solely on formal regulatory structures or established institutional cues. Instead, legitimacy often emerges through symbolic interactions, narrative alignment, and social endorsements (Vaara et al., 2024). Influencers and celebrities act as informal communicative intermediaries who command public visibility, cultural relevance, and perceived authenticity attributes that help bridge gaps between organizations and fragmented stakeholder groups. As Rubinelli (2025) highlights, influencers are often perceived as trustworthy, relatable, and credible, making them effective amplifiers of institutional messages.

In modern communication ecosystems, influencers as well as celebrities play the role of "symbolic brokers" while carrying along the three main elements- visibility, perceived authenticity, and trust, characterized by social embedding (Balaban & Szabolcs, 2022). Their support or association with organizational messages brings about the extent of the message's diffusion, emotional resonance, and cultural relevance. Lee and Eastin (2021) point out that influencers are assessed based on trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity, which are the major attributes that the audiences often associate with the organizations they promote. In situations where institutional credibility is doubtful and public dependence on digital communicators is very high, as in Palestine, influencers can play a major role in making the legitimacy signals within OCS much more powerful.

- **Narrative Framing × UIC and Legitimacy**

The interaction between narrative framing and UIC demonstrated a significant positive effect on legitimacy ( $\beta = 0.062$ ,  $p < 0.019$ ). This result indicates that the influencers' actions of either telling or enforcing the organizational stories made those stories more familiar, credible, and culture-related. Von Billerbeck (2023) states that the narrative's legitimacy is increased whenever the communication is done by the actors who are part of the social & cultural environment. Influencers, through their authentic representation and social closeness, assist organizations in framing their stories in a manner that satisfies the community's expectations. In difficult situations like Palestine,

where the different parties often use symbols instead of signals from institutions, the presence of influencers helps to clarify the situation and make the narrative more widely accepted.

In recent academic literature, it has been pointed out that the credibility of narratives greatly increases if they are backed by important social figures who are capable of communicating the messages of institutions in a way that resonates with the culture of the audience (Lu, 2024; Soublière & Lockwood, 2022). Influencers, who are part of and rooted in certain public sectors, facilitate the process of organizations filling in the narrative gaps, particularly in the areas where political fragmentation leads the competing stories to be the ones that form the public's opinion. Their participation in the process not only increases the cognitive legitimacy of the narratives by making them easier to comprehend, but it also increases the sociopolitical legitimacy of the narratives by indicating that there is a greater social acceptance.

- **Audience Targeting × UIC and Legitimacy**

Targeting the audience displayed a significant moderation effect through UIC ( $\beta = 0.042$ ,  $p < 0.042$ ). Influencers frequently have very distinct audiences with precise interests, demographics, and values. Their participation assists companies in fine-tuning the communication and getting access to the very specific parties of stakeholders that are more likely to be impacted.

According to Adams (2022), legitimacy is not a universal concept and varies across different groups. UIC is a great theory application since it gets organizations to interact with different social micro-communities where trust is already established. The case of Palestine is a good example of this, where the audience is divided into groups based on politics, age, and wealth. Influencer communication is characterized by deep relational credibility in certain groups, which strengthens the organizational legitimacy partnership with the stakeholders and expectations.

- **Message Consistency × UIC and Legitimacy**

The impact of UIC on message consistency was significant as well ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p < 0.19$ ). Influencers' support by means of their behavior, such as reiterating, endorsing, and aligning their content with the organization's messages through different digital platforms, is the main reason for the consistency across the organization. The perception

of contradictions is minimized, and the coherence, which is considered to be one of the main factors for legitimacy according to Siraz et al. (2023), is strengthened.

This prolonged agreement is very useful in the online world, where misinformation, different stories, and quick content changes could make the audience lose confidence. When the influencers repeat, support, or make the organization's messages steady, they not only make the understanding clearer but also create a common sense of meaning among the scattered audiences. Meck (2019) argues that message consistency among different communicative actors boosts the perception of trustworthiness and predictability. In unstable environments where trust in institutions is low, such backing from socially connected communicators gains extra legitimacy. The influencers' reiteration of messages convinces the stakeholders of the communication being purposeful, synchronized, and trustworthy. These are the four main factors for gaining cognitive and sociopolitical legitimacy.

- **Credibility and Trust × UIC and Legitimacy**

The interaction between credibility and trust and UIC was significant ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), thus proving that influential professionals do increase the credibility of messages that are part of corporate communication. AlFarraj et al. (2021) indicated that influencers are recognized as having the same trustworthiness, knowledge, and authenticity characteristics as the organizations they promote in the consumers' eyes. This coincides with Suchman (1995) conception of moral and pragmatic legitimacy, in which indications of honesty, transparency, and reliability affect the perceived appropriateness of the situation.

According to Jacobs and Liebrecht (2025), in their study, third-party endorsements impart a stronger image of organizational sincerity and goodwill. In delicate political situations, where people have little or no trust in governmental institutions, the influence of the endorsers can be seen as morally legitimate (value similarity) and practically legitimate (efficiency and support to the stakeholders), thus forming a trust that takes the place of and compensates for the weaknesses of the institutions (Sahibzada & Jia, 2025).

- **Responsiveness × UIC and Legitimacy**

The interaction between responsiveness and UIC also demonstrated a significant effect on legitimacy ( $\beta = 0.043$ ,  $p < 0.042$ ). Through influencers, responsiveness is enhanced in the sense of enabling dialogues, quick feedback, and participatory engagement that Macnamara and Gregory (2020) consider to be the communicative value creation elements. Complying with the expectations of the stakeholders, influencers are frequently seen as more approachable and interactive than formal organizations (Hauvala, 2025), which in turn makes the organizational responses less formal and more accountable. In politically sensitive situations, where the demands for transparency and responsiveness are very high, influencers make it possible to maintain continuous communication that legitimizes the organization through relational signals of care, attentiveness, and accountability.

Taken together, the findings show that influencers and celebrities are the ones who turn up the volume on legitimacy, allowing the aforementioned factors, namely narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness, to exert their positive influence even more on organizational legitimacy. They offer organizations the ability to extend their reach, equip them with the tools to communicate more effectively with their audiences, and also boost the credibility of the communication practices, which in turn allows these organizations to handle the very delicate and ever-changing political situations more easily. In such situations, influencers are of great help to organizations in terms of different social groups, for instance, the youth, local communities, and diaspora networks, each of which has different expectations regarding legitimacy. The influencers' skill in placing messages into cultural narratives increases the organization's perceived appropriateness (PASA) and sociopolitical alignment (SOL), which are the two constructs that got the highest levels of legitimacy in the descriptive results of the study.

According to the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, 2007), influencers enhance an organization's capacity to detect, interpret, and react to the expectations of stakeholders. They fulfill the role of external sensing devices by giving real-time feedback from their audiences and acting as channels for public opinion. From the RBV standpoint (Barney, 1991), influencers grant firms entry to the soft assets of resource, credibility, visibility, and symbolic capital, which are valuable, hard to duplicate, and socially

integrated at the same time. These resources augment the communication ability of firms not as direct assets but as strategic complements that are externally leveraged.

### **5.5 Moderating Effect of Use of Influencers and Celebrities on the Relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies and Reputation**

The outcomes of the research verify that the Use of Influencers and Celebrities (UIC) has a substantial moderating impact on the bond between Organizational Communication Strategies (OCS) and organizational reputation, thus backing Hypothesis 4. The degree of moderation effects is slight; however, their presence as statistically significant across all OCS dimensions ( $p < 0.042$ ) suggests that influencers and celebrities perform the role of the reputational value amplifiers (Hess et al., 2022), and at the same time, they are reinforcing the communication channels through which organizations influence stakeholder perceptions (Zhang et al., 2024).

In such delicate institutional contexts as Palestine, where informal communication cues are the main support of the stakeholders because of the low institutional trust, social media influencers are regarded as trustworthy intermediaries who manage to make messages more widespread, more understandable, and more emotionally touching (Muhtaseb, 2022). These results align with current scholarship positioning influencers as “reputational brokers” whose visibility, authenticity, and cultural embeddedness enhance organizational standing within targeted publics (Reinikainen et al., 2025; Rindova et al., 2005).

- **Narrative Framing × UIC and Reputation**

The interaction between narrative framing (NF) and UIC showed a significant positive effect on reputation ( $\beta = 0.042$ ,  $p < 0.042$ ). This implication means that social media influencers are the ones who give the strategic narratives overshadowing the organizations their emotional and authenticity appeal. According to Hoblos et al. (2024), the main source of reputation is not performance alone but the interpretive frames that the stakeholders use to understand an organization’s identity and behavior. Influencers support the characters created by the organization via storytelling or by giving their followers the narrative in a manner that appeals to them. Tierney et al. (2022) refer to the community of social actors with cultural legitimacy as the ones who co-create reputational meaning. Influencers are the ones who make this personalization of

narratives (Feng et al., 2021), who put the organizations' messages into relatable forms (Vanninen et al., 2023), and who expand the range of narratives to the audiences that might be the hardest for organizations to reach (Hudders et al., 2021). Consequently, embedded within the signals of the reputation tied to narrative framing, authenticity, purpose, and value creation, they become more salient, trusted, and memorable.

- **Audience Targeting × UIC and Reputation**

Audience targeting (AT) exhibited a significant moderated effect through UIC ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $p < 0.019$ ). Influencers usually have separate and very often highly interactive groups of audiences. Their participation makes it possible for businesses to access these groups more accurately and with more influence. This is consistent with the study conducted by Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that influencing marketing boosts the positive side of the company's reputation significantly by making the message more relevant and the branding more authentic. In a Palestinian setting, marked by a variety of stakeholder identities, UIC reinforces reputational cohesion among different age groups, political orientations, and social affiliations. By acting as bridges, influencers allow organizations to connect with distant or fragmented publics, thereby improving the reputation performance of the company across segments (Leung et al., 2022). Schouten et al. (2021) show that an influencer's endorsement gives the message a new significance while making the audience trust the brand more. In the Palestinian context, with socially and politically diverse stakeholders, employing influencers is a strategy that not only mitigates the perception gap but also amplifies the company's reputation among the targeted groups by radiating the communication according to the values and expectations of each segment.

- **Message Consistency × UIC and Reputation**

Message consistency (MC), when moderated by UIC, produced a significant positive effect on reputation ( $\beta = 0.043$ ,  $p < 0.042$ ). It is very well known that consistent communication forms the basis of the very reputation that is hanging over the heads of the organizations, as stakeholders expect the same from the organization, that is, they judge its reliability based on the consistency among messages and platforms. The influencers are a vital part of the process as they repeat, align, and strengthen the organizational messages through their content, thereby creating a multi-channel echo that

can greatly cohere (Enke & Borchers, 2021). As You and Hon (2021) state, the reputation is built up when stakeholders see a match between the announced identity and the organizational behavior. The influencers help to avoid interpretive fragmentation by offering constant messaging with different touchpoints. Amidu et al. (2024) talk about the narrative alignment being the basis of predictability and trust, the two main pillars that hold a great reputation. In unstable situations, where information can very easily be distorted or politicized, influencer-led communication not only preserves but even enhances the reputation of the organization in the eyes of the stakeholders.

- **Credibility and Trust × UIC and Reputation**

The moderation of credibility and trust (CT) through UIC was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.041$ ,  $p < 0.044$ ). When influencers are seen as trustworthy, their support adds to the impact that communication coming from a credible organization has on the organization's reputation. Freberg et al. (2011) and Meng and Tench (2025) assert that such trust can be, actually, passed on to the organizations endorsing the influencers, leading to increased trust among the communication and stakeholders of the organization. In the downtrodden regions where institutional credibility is very low, UIC, being the communication tool that contains the organization in the influencer's community, empowers the latter with additional reputational validation. This credibility transfer process makes the organization be viewed in a more positive light as far as its integrity, ethical practices, and competence are concerned; thus, the organization's reputational favorability is enhanced, and skepticism is lowered. However, as Sahibzada and Jia (2025) argue, in situations where the signs of formal governance are weak, the trust factor of communicators who are embedded in the society usually takes the place of the institutional assurance.

- **Responsiveness × UIC and Reputation**

Responsiveness (RES) showed a significant moderation effect through UIC ( $\beta = 0.064$ ,  $p < 0.019$ ), making it one of the strongest moderators for reputation. Influencers uplift the reputational value of responsiveness by making it possible to have faster, more conversational, and more personalized audience interactions. Previous studies by Etter et al. (2019) indicated that in the digital world, the reputational co-construction occurs through constant interaction and fast feedback loops. These loops are made possible by

influencers when they create conduits for conversation, solve issues, and give a human face to company replies. Cheng and Lee (2023) highlight the role of responsiveness in the creation of contemporary communication value; likewise, Bach et al. (2021) provide evidence that these responses, being fair and accountable in the eyes of the public, result in higher reputational evaluations. In the Palestinian scenario, where stakeholders often demand immediate reactions as a result of the unstable political and social conditions, influencers are regarded as the organizational responsiveness accelerators. Through their active involvement, they magnify organizational actions, cut response time, and improve perceived organizational trust, thus leading to a positive impact on reputation.

The overall moderation results indicate that the influencer and celebrity presence is like a reputation booster. They are not the main source of the reputation but instead increase the impact of the strong communication tactics by making them widespread, trustworthy, coherent, and personalized. The influencers and celebrities' moderation has a big impact on the relationship between Organizational Communication Strategies and organizational reputation; they make the relationship even stronger. In difficult situations like that of Palestine, where the stakeholders are looking for signals of authenticity, credibility, and relational closeness, the influencers will be the trusted intermediaries and cultural translators who will offer the communication strategies the reputational advantages. Their participation will make the message clearer, wider, and more emotionally impactful, thus the positive reputation judgments will be reinforced, and the organization's long-term standing will be supported.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the study's empirical findings were linked to theoretical foundations and contextual realities of medium- and large-sized Palestinian companies by means of statistical results interpretation. The analysis validated that communication strategy, articulated through narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness, is the main factor in creating organizational legitimacy and reputation in unstable communities. The effectiveness of each communication dimension was strong and positive to the point where it was indicated that legitimacy and reputation in politically constrained environments are not gained through organizational performance but rather through communication as a resource.

The results also showed that the presence of influencers and celebrities made the communication strategies' effects on legitimacy and reputation significantly stronger. These moderating effects were not very large, but they were still seen in all the communication dimensions, thus indicating that the influencers are acting as symbols of amplifiers who augment the message's importance, trustworthiness, and social resonance. Their role is even more significant in the Palestinian context, which has fragmented institutions and weak regulatory structures, making the informal communicators and digital trust networks more relied upon.

Overall, the chapter emphasizes that strategic communication is a dynamic capability of the organization that is essential for dealing with the fragility of the institution. Communication strategies not only help organizations to shape the social perception, but also to build trust and to have active dialogue with various stakeholders, thus granting organizations social acceptance and a good reputation. The results together affirm that legitimacy and reputation in unstable situations are the product of the interaction between organizational communication practices and external communicative actors. This reinforces the main thesis: in such a place where formal institutions are inadequate, communication is the channel and the means through which organizations get their existence, credibility, and social importance.

## **Contribution**

### **Theoretical Contribution**

- First, the research redefines the communication strategy as an organizational capacity instead of a functional activity. The proof of impact in the case of narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness on legitimacy and reputation via empirical methods, makes communication a dynamic capability (Teece, 2007) which supports organizations in recognizing, interpreting, and reacting to the times of change. This has opened up a new perspective in the literature, which was mainly focused on communication in stable corporate contexts (Macnamara & Gregory, 2020; Zerfass et al., 2020).
- Second, the research enhances the legitimacy theory by showing that in fragile environments, legitimacy is mainly communicative and socially constructed

rather than being granted by institutions. Following Suchman (1995) and Suddaby et al. (2017), the findings verify that legitimacy is in continuous negotiation and is deeply influenced by strategic communication. In Palestinian organizations where the formal mechanisms of validation are feeble, the research reveals that legitimacy comes from symbolic alignment, narrative coherence, and engagement of relationships with stakeholders.

- Third, the research contributes significantly to the reputation literature by presenting empirical proof that reputation in weak environments is influenced by communication signals rather than by performance indicators only. This not only agrees with but also broadens the theory of Fombrun and Shanley (1990) and Rindova et al. (2005) that reputations are made through meaning and symbols. The research reveals that all five communication factors are strong predictors of the reputation, thus bringing to the forefront communicative consistency, credibility, and responsiveness as major reputational resources in low institutional trust environments.
- Finally, the work has given a tremendous boost to the literature by proposing and putting to the test a comprehensive communication-centered model that combines resource-based theory (Barney, 1991), dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007), and strategic communication scholarship. This one model not only connects the fragmented theoretical areas but also provides a clearer and fuller picture of the ways that organizations obtain and maintain legitimacy and reputation during the times of weak institutions.

### **Practical Contribution**

- First, the results highlight that strategic communication ought to be regarded as a primary strategic function and not as a subordinate activity. Through investing in communication planning, audience analysis, message alignment, and continuous stakeholder feedback, Palestinian organizations can improve their legitimacy and reputation. The strong predictive power of OCS indicates that communication needs to be integrated into decision-making and crisis management processes of the organizations, especially when the institutional support is weak.
- Second, trust of the stakeholders is the result of three qualities: credibility, transparency, and responsiveness, which are identified by the research as the most

important factors. Insecure environments are characterized by mistrust, and hence, even the best and most intensive efforts to make the organization come out as good may not be enough. Communication departments of such organizations should, therefore, focus on teaching, informing, and setting up processes and platforms that make these characteristics evident at all times and in all places.

- Third, the study shows convincingly that influencers and stars can support communication tactics; however, they have to be employed in a strategic way. The moderating role of influencers and stars denotes that they boost the effectiveness of the message, but are not able to replace the reliability and consistency of the organization. Hence, companies should choose influencers whose morals, target groups, and ways of communicating are in line with the organizational identity. Implementing partnerships, creating content guidelines, and establishing monitoring mechanisms are some of the ways that organizations can employ to maximize credibility transfer while minimizing the risk of reputational damage.
- Finally, the validated model presents companies with a diagnostic tool for their communication capabilities evaluation and improvement. Firms can recognize deficiencies and create precise plans to bolster trust and reputation through performance measurement in narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility, and responsiveness. The model's versatility allows its application in different industries, and it can enhance the ability of organizations to survive in unstable situations.

## **Practical Implications and Recommendations**

### **Practical Implications for Practitioners**

- Treat strategic communication as a core capability, not an auxiliary function: The research indicated that every aspect of strategic communication, narrative framing, audience targeting, message consistency, credibility and trust, and responsiveness played an important role in influencing legitimacy and reputation to a considerable degree. Hence, practitioners ought to make communication planning an integral part of strategic management, ensuring that communication is included in decision-making, crisis response, and stakeholder engagement processes.

- Strengthen narrative framing to enhance public perception: The organizations should create well-organized, value-based stories that communicate very well their identity, mission, and social contribution. Narratives that are in line with the expectations of the community can reduce disbelief and increase the power of the institution in places where trust in the institution is weak.
- Apply precise and culturally sensitive audience targeting: Palestinian organizations are in the middle of different social, cultural, and political segments. Therefore, practitioners have to adopt data-driven methods in order to know stakeholder needs properly and communicate them accordingly. Communication aimed at specific segments helps organizations to create their relevance and, thus, to reinforce both their legitimacy and reputation among the varied audience groups.
- Ensure strong message consistency across channels: Consistent messages will not only reduce confusion but also make the communication more reliable and, consequently, build up trust even more. Companies need to plan their internal and external communications, create and apply the same communication rules, and then make sure that all their representatives, employees, and online platforms are conveying the same messages to avoid any weakening of their reputations.
- Prioritize credibility and transparency: The research indicates that the strongest predictors of both legitimacy and reputation are credibility and trust. Companies should implement open practices, be honest about their problems and shortcomings, and have systems for confirming and authenticating information before it is made public.
- Build systems for rapid and responsible responsiveness: Responsiveness proved to be an influential determinant of stakeholder views. It is recommended that practitioners set up real-time communication protocols, digital monitoring systems, and social listening tools to be able to react in a timely and effective manner to stakeholders' concerns, especially during political events or crises.
- Use influencers and celebrities strategically, not superficially: The influencers' meddling indicates their participation boosts the trustworthiness and commendation of the company when they are in sync with the communication tactics. The companies should, first of all, make good partnerships with influencers who are in tune with the company's ideals, have good standing in their

circles, and are open in their communications. This entails thorough checking, connection development, and constant synchronization.

### **Practical Implications for Policymakers**

- **Develop national guidelines for ethical influencer–organization collaboration:** Due to the increasing popularity of influencers and their influence on public opinion, policymakers should create rules that will govern the openness, declaring, and ethical behavior among influencers and organizations. This will not only keep organizations and the public safe from misinformation and reputational manipulation but also support the influencers’ cause.
- **Promote communication transparency standards within organizations:** policymakers can contribute to the legitimacy and trust of the public and good communication through the implementation of such transparency benchmarks as the disclosure of information, reporting systems, and public accountability procedures. These practices have the power to enhance institutional trust and, at the same time, facilitate stakeholder involvement.
- **Strengthen digital communication literacy across sectors:** As the legitimacy and repute of organizations depend more and more on the online sphere, it is recommended that the authorities take the step of funding the digital literacy programs that would empower the organizations with the right skills for the management of digital communication, controlling online narratives, and being able to counter misinformation effectively.
- **Encourage capacity-building programs for strategic communication:** Narrating, managing crises, engaging stakeholders, and responding digitally are all areas that training would cover, which would then enhance communication levels within the private sector. Such training can be provided through partnerships between public agencies, universities, and chambers of commerce.
- **Support the development of independent trust-building platforms:** Institutions can facilitate verification bodies or credibility-rating systems to reduce uncertainty and strengthen the reliability of information being communicated by organizations. This is particularly important in fragile environments where institutional authority is fragmented.

- Foster multi-stakeholder communication frameworks: Policymakers need to motivate cooperation among business, civil society, and local communities to develop common communication platforms. The sharing of information, unification of narratives, and the establishment of public trust in organizational communication can be some of the resultant benefits of these communication frameworks.
- Strengthen institutional communication channels to reduce dependency on informal actors: Even though influencers have a significant function, the total dependence on them indicates the existence of trust issues between the institutions. Increasing the communication channels between the government and the regulators can lessen the difference in information and can also give the private sector more stable cues of legitimacy through trust.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

- Expand the Research to Other Fragile or Conflict-Affected Contexts: The present research is limited to only medium and large Palestinian businesses, which are operating in a very fragile political and institutional environment. Further studies could use the proposed model in the contexts of Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, or areas recovering from conflict to evaluate the model's applicability across cultures and to explore the impact of different types of fragility on communication-legitimacy-reputation dynamics.
- Integrate Organizational Performance as an Additional Outcome Variable: This research was limited to the concepts of legitimacy and reputation; however, upcoming research might look into the indirect influence of strategic communication on organizational performance, such as financial performance, stakeholder support, customer retention, or employee engagement. This would clarify the conversion of intangible communication-related capabilities into measurable operational outcomes in a more profound manner.
- Conduct Longitudinal Research to Capture Dynamic Changes Over Time: Legitimacy and reputation, the components of which are shaped over time by interactions, are hence considered to be dynamic. The running of longitudinal studies that would provide the researchers with information on the shifts in communication strategies, influencer involvement, and stakeholder perceptions,

in particular, would be a great idea in times of crises, political shocks, or major organizational transitions.

- **Incorporate Qualitative or Mixed-Methods Approaches:** A quantitative PLS-SEM framework was applied in this research. Future work could be based on using qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, or discourse analysis. Mixed-methods research might provide a better and more culturally sensitive understanding of communication processes in delicate environments.
- **Investigate Internal Stakeholders and Employee Communication:** This research mainly dealt with external stakeholders. However, one of the future areas of research can be to find out the role of strategic communication in creating internal legitimacy and reputation based on employee evaluation, alongside that of the employees playing as informal ambassadors, affecting the public's view.
- **Expand the Model to Include Crisis Communication Dynamics:** in unstable contexts often encounter crises as a part of their routine. The next research could combine crisis communication tactics like openness, responsibility, and rectification to investigate the impact of these factors on the legitimacy and reputation outcomes in the course of turbulent times.
- **Assess the Ethical Implications of Influencer Engagement:** Future studies might delve into the ethical aspects of influencer collaborations. Factors like the influencer's honesty, the practices of revealing, and the possible control over the public's view would be the main issues to consider. The discussion on these ethical aspects would lead to more responsible communication practices in sensitive political situations.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Research Questionnaire English Version**

#### **Questionnaire**

Dear Participants,

In your hands is a questionnaire distributed by a Ph.D. student in the Strategic Management program at the School of College of Graduate Studies, Arab American University of Palestine. The study topic is **“The impact of strategic communication on the reputation and legitimacy of medium- and large-sized Palestinian companies: The moderating role of influencers and celebrities”**.

Completing the questionnaire is expected to consume approximately 10-15 minutes of your time, and the gathered information will contribute to academic research. Your participation is entirely anonymous, and there is no need to provide your name or department. The compiled data will be presented solely as summary statistics. Your involvement in this survey is optional, and you can refrain from answering any questions. By responding to all questions, you signify your agreement to participate.

Your participation is greatly valued, as your input will significantly contribute to the study's findings.

If you have any questions concerning the research or the questionnaire, please don't hesitate to reach out to the researcher on the mobile number provided: 00972-\*\*\*\*\*.

**Thanks for your cooperation and time**

**\*Part One (Demographics Data). Please fill in the following**

**1. Age:**

- Less than 25 years old
- From 25 to 35 years old
- From 36 to 45 years old
- More than 45 years old

**2. Gender: -**

- Male
- Female

**3. Educational Degree?**

- Below bachelor's degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

**4. Work Experience**

- Less than 3 years
- From 3 to 5 years
- From 6 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

**5. Job Role:**

- Stakeholders
- Manager
- Head of Department
- Policy Advisor or Consultant
- Administrative Staff
- Customer Service
- Marketing
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Sector Activity:**

- Banking and Finance Services
- Telecommunications Services
- Hospitality Services
- Insurance Services
- Industrial Services
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Institution Location**

- Northern West Bank
- Central West Bank
- Southern West Bank

**8. Institution Size**

- Medium (From 20 to 49 employees)
- Large (More than 49 employees)

**\*Part Two (Questionnaires)**

Please indicate the level of your agreement or disagreement with the statement, as it reflects your satisfaction.

Mark the appropriate response with an (X): Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

Item #	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Organizational Communication Strategies</b>						
<b>Narrative Framing</b>						
1.	Our organization ensures that its narratives are aligned with its core values and ethical principles.					
2.	Our organization encourages employees to contribute to public communication during key issues or crises.					
3.	Our communication efforts aim to frame the organization’s role and actions as legitimate and responsible.					
4.	Our narratives are designed to evoke emotions (such as trust, hope, or pride) that align with our communication goals.					
5.	We evaluate the potential unintended consequences of our narrative framing on different stakeholder groups.					
6.	Our organization actively monitors how external stakeholders (such as media or social media) frame their activities.					
7.	We coordinate our narrative framing consistently across all communication channels (online, offline, internal, and external).					

8.	Our communication strategy is regularly updated to reflect shifts in global discourses relevant to our sector.					
<b>Audience Targeting</b>						
9.	Our organization systematically segments its audiences to improve communication effectiveness.					
10.	Communication content is regularly adapted based on updated knowledge of audience preferences.					
11.	Trusted individuals or organizations are identified and used to support targeted communication efforts.					
12.	Feedback about prior communication efforts is actively used to refine future audience targeting.					
13.	We ensure that our messages are consistent across all organizational levels and communication channels.					
14.	Communication efforts explicitly consider audience diversity in terms of culture, values, and socio-economic background.					
15.	Communication teams routinely assess whether messages resonate differently across audience groups.					
16.	Our communication strategy includes specific messaging to support the emotional wellbeing of different audience segments.					
<b>Message Consistency</b>						
17.	Our organization ensures consistency of message content and tone across all communication platforms.					
18.	Our crisis narratives are framed consistently over time, even as situations evolve.					
19.	We follow a clear media integration strategy to ensure consistent communication across traditional and new media.					
20.	We provide timely and consistent updates across all communication platforms to avoid stakeholder confusion.					
21.	Our communication strategy balances interactive dialogue with the need for message consistency.					
22.	Internal communication guidelines help employees maintain consistency with external messages.					
23.	Our organization actively addresses inconsistencies that may arise in external narratives about us.					
<b>Credibility and Trust</b>						
24.	We provide employees with accurate and trustworthy information through internal communication channels.					
25.	Leadership communication in our organization fosters trust and confidence among employees.					
26.	Our online communication is perceived as credible and transparent by users.					
27.	Users trust the honesty and reliability of our organization's online communication.					
28.	Our organization is attentive to how different media platforms affect the credibility of our communication.					

29.	Our organization avoids using misleading or manipulative messages to maintain credibility and trust.					
30.	We ensure that employee communication supports and reinforces the organization's credibility.					
31.	Our organization is trusted to provide honest and reliable information in public messaging.					
32.	Our organization monitors and addresses potential credibility risks in high-stakes communication contexts.					
<b>Responsiveness</b>						
33.	Our organization provides timely and spontaneous responses to stakeholder concerns.					
34.	We actively engage in interactive dialogue with stakeholders through various communication channels.					
35.	We have established procedures and systems to ensure consistent responsiveness to stakeholder inquiries.					
36.	Our organization demonstrates a sustained commitment to ongoing dialogue and responsiveness with its publics.					
37.	Our organization is responsive to public needs and concerns in its public messaging.					
38.	We adapt our responsiveness practices to fit the characteristics and expectations of different media platforms.					
39.	We avoid misleading or manipulative responses, even when addressing sensitive issues.					
40.	We provide guidance to employees to help them respond appropriately and consistently to stakeholder concerns.					
41.	We monitor and address responsiveness risks when communicating in high-stakes situations.					
42.	Employees feel that their concerns are heard and addressed in a timely manner by the organization.					
<b>Legitimacy</b>						
<b>Cognitive Legitimacy</b>						
43.	Our organization is generally accepted by its environment.					
44.	Our organization plays a necessary role in its environment.					
45.	Our organization is widely recognized as an established actor in its environment.					
<b>Sociopolitical Legitimacy</b>						
46.	The activities of this organization are consistent with existing social norms and values.					
47.	The goals of this organization align with the values of society.					
48.	The organization contributes positively to society.					
49.	The organization's actions are consistent with what is expected by society.					
<b>Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance</b>						
50.	Our organization has an appropriate image in the social system in which it operates.					

51.	Society perceives that the organization acts properly.					
52.	Society considers that organization is necessary.					
53.	Society considers that the organization complies with its obligations and responsibilities.					
54.	Society considers that the organization is socially accepted.					
<b>Reputation</b>						
<b>Generalized Reputation Judgment</b>						
55.	Our organization has a good reputation.					
56.	Our organization is favorably regarded.					
57.	Our organization is well thought of					
58.	Our organization is held in high esteem.					
<b>Perceived Organizational Reputation (Internal View)</b>						
59.	I have a favorable impression of my organization.					
60.	I respect my organization.					
61.	Our organization is well thought of by the public.					
<b>Social media and Communication Influence on Reputation</b>						
62.	The organization's social media presence improves its reputation.					
63.	The organization's social media presence enhances its image					
64.	Communication by the organization positively influences its external reputation.					
65.	The organization's communication practices enhance how it is perceived by society.					
<b>Use of Influencers and Celebrities</b>						
<b>Parasocial Relationship</b>						
66.	I look forward to watching the influencer on her channel.					
67.	If the influencer appeared on another YouTube channel, I would watch that video.					
68.	When I am watching the influencer, I feel as if I am part of her group.					
69.	I think the influencer is like an old friend.					
70.	I would like to meet the influencer in person.					
71.	If there was a story about the influencer in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.					
72.	The influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.					
73.	When the influencer shows me how she feels about the brand, it helps me and makes up my own mind about the brand.					
<b>Parasocial Relationship</b>						
74.	I feel the influencer is honest.					
75.	I consider the influencer to be trustworthy.					
76.	I feel the influencer is truthful.					

77.	I consider the influencer to be sincere.					
78.	I feel the influencer knows a lot about the service.					
79.	I feel the influencer is competent to make assertions about the service.					
80.	I consider the influencer sufficiently experienced to make assertions about the service.					
81.	I consider the influencer an expert on the service.					
82.	The influencer and I have a lot in common.					
83.	The influencer and I are very alike.					
84.	I can easily identify with the influencer.					

## Appendix B: Research Questionnaire Arabic Version

### الاستبيان

المشاركين الأعزاء،

بين أيديكم استبيان يتم توزيعه من قبل طالب دكتوراه في برنامج الإدارة الاستراتيجية بكلية الدراسات العليا - الجامعة العربية الأمريكية في فلسطين.

موضوع الدراسة هو "تأثير الاتصال الاستراتيجي على سمعة وشرعية الشركات الفلسطينية المتوسطة والكبيرة: الدور الوسيط للمشاهير والمؤثرين".

من المتوقع أن يستغرق إكمال الاستبيان حوالي 10-15 دقيقة من وقتكم، وستساهم المعلومات التي سيتم جمعها في البحث الأكاديمي. مشاركتكم ستكون سرية بشكل كامل، ولا حاجة لذكر اسمكم أو مكان عملكم. سيتم تقديم البيانات المجمعة في صورة إحصاءات ملخصة فقط. إن مشاركتكم في هذا الاستبيان اختيارية، ويمكنكم الامتناع عن الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة.

إن مشاركتكم ذات قيمة كبيرة، حيث أن مدخلاتكم ستساهم بشكل كبير في نتائج الدراسة.

إذا كانت لديكم أي استفسارات بخصوص البحث أو الاستبيان، فلا تترددوا في التواصل مع الباحث على الرقم المحمول:

00972-\*\*\*\*\*

عوض دعيس

الجامعة العربية الأمريكية

شكرًا لتعاونكم ووقتكم.

الجزء الأول (البيانات الديموغرافية). الرجاء تعبئة ما يلي:

1. العمر؟

أقل من 25 سنة

من 25 إلى 35 سنة

من 36 إلى 45 سنة

أكثر من 45 سنة

2. الجنس؟

ذكر

أنثى

3. ما هو أعلى مؤهل علمي حصلت عليه؟

أقل من البكالوريوس

بكالوريوس

ماجستير

دكتوراة

4. عدد سنوات الخبرة؟

أقل من 3 سنتين

من 3 إلى 5 سنوات

من 6 إلى 10 سنوات

أكثر من 10 سنوات

5. مستوى الدور الوظيفي؟

أصحاب المصلحة

مدير

رئيس قسم

مستشار

موظفون إداريون

خدمة العملاء

التسويق

أخرى (يرجى التحديد): \_\_\_\_\_.

## 6. قطاع الخدمة؟

[ ] الخدمات المصرفية والمالية

[ ] خدمات الاتصالات

[ ] خدمات الفنادق

[ ] خدمات التأمين

[ ] الخدمات الصناعية

[ ] أخرى (يرجى التحديد): \_\_\_\_\_.

## 7. موقع المؤسسة:

[ ] شمال الضفة الغربية

[ ] وسط الضفة الغربية

[ ] جنوب الضفة الغربية

## 8. حجم المؤسسة:

[ ] متوسطة (من 20 إلى 49 موظفًا)

[ ] كبيرة (أكثر من 49 موظفًا)

## الجزء الثاني (الاستبيانات)

يرجى الإشارة إلى مدى اتفاقك أو عدم اتفاقك مع البيان الذي يصف مدى رضاك. استخدم الرمز (X) للإجابة المناسبة (أعارض بشدة، أعارض، محايد، أوافق، أو أوافق بشدة).

#	الاسئلة	أعارض بشدة	أعارض	محايد	أوافق	أوافق بشدة
استراتيجيات الاتصال المؤسسي						
صياغة السرد						
1.	تضمن منظماتنا أن تكون سردياتها متوافقة مع قيمها الأساسية ومبادئها الأخلاقية.					
2.	تشجع منظماتنا الموظفين على المشاركة في الاتصال العام خلال القضايا أو الأزمات الرئيسية.					
3.	تهدف جهودنا الاتصالية إلى تأطير دور المنظمة وأفعالها على أنها مشروعة ومسؤولة.					
4.	نُصِّم سردياتنا لإثارة مشاعر (مثل الثقة، الأمل، أو الفخر) تتماشى مع أهدافنا الاتصالية.					
5.	نقوم بتقييم النتائج غير المقصودة المحتملة لصياغة سردياتنا على مختلف مجموعات أصحاب المصلحة.					
6.	تراقب منظماتنا بنشاط كيفية قيام الأطراف الخارجية (مثل الإعلام أو وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي) بتأطير أنشطتها.					

					7. نسق صياغة السرديات لدينا بشكل متنسق عبر جميع قنوات الاتصال (الرقمية، وغير الرقمية، الداخلية، والخارجية).
					8. تُحدّث استراتيجيتنا الاتصالية بانتظام لتعكس التحولات في الخطابات العالمية ذات الصلة بقطاعنا.
<b>استهداف الجمهور</b>					
					9. تقوم منظمتنا بتجزئة جمهورها بشكل منهجي لتحسين فاعلية الاتصال.
					10. يتم تكييف محتوى الاتصال بانتظام استناداً إلى المعرفة المحدثة بتفضيلات الجمهور.
					11. يتم تحديد الأفراد أو المنظمات الموثوق بهم واستخدامهم لدعم الجهود الاتصالية الموجهة.
					12. يُستخدم التغذية الراجعة بشأن الجهود الاتصالية السابقة لتطوير استهداف الجمهور مستقبلاً.
					13. نضمن أن تكون رسائلنا متنسقة عبر جميع مستويات المنظمة وقنوات الاتصال.
					14. تأخذ الجهود الاتصالية في الاعتبار بشكل صريح تنوع الجمهور من حيث الثقافة والقيم والخلفية الاجتماعية-الاقتصادية.
					15. تقوم فرق الاتصال بشكل دوري بتقييم مدى اختلاف استجابة الرسائل بين مجموعات الجمهور.
					16. تشمل استراتيجيتنا الاتصالية رسائل محددة لدعم الرفاه النفسي والعاطفي لمختلف شرائح الجمهور.
<b>اتساق الرسائل</b>					
					17. تضمن منظمتنا اتساق محتوى الرسائل ونبرتها عبر جميع منصات الاتصال.
					18. يتم تأطير سرديات الأزمات لدينا بشكل متنسق مع مرور الوقت، حتى مع تغيير المواقف.
					19. نتبع استراتيجية تكامل إعلامي واضحة لضمان اتساق الاتصال عبر الإعلام التقليدي والجديد.
					20. نوفر تحديثات آنية ومتسقة عبر جميع منصات الاتصال لتجنّب إرباك أصحاب المصلحة.
					21. توازن استراتيجيتنا الاتصالية بين الحوار التفاعلي والحاجة إلى اتساق الرسائل.
					22. تساعد إرشادات الاتصال الداخلي الموظفين على الحفاظ على الاتساق مع الرسائل الخارجية.
					23. تعالج منظمتنا بفاعلية أية تناقضات قد تنشأ في السرديات الخارجية عنها.
<b>المصداقية والثقة</b>					
					24. نوفر للموظفين معلومات دقيقة وموثوقة عبر قنوات الاتصال الداخلية.
					25. يعزز اتصال القيادة في منظمتنا الثقة والاطمئنان لدى الموظفين.
					26. يُنظر إلى تواصلنا عبر الإنترنت على أنه موثوق وشفاف من قبل المستخدمين.
					27. يثق المستخدمون في صدق وموثوقية اتصال منظمتنا عبر الإنترنت.
					28. تُولي منظمتنا اهتمامًا بكيفية تأثير المنصات الإعلامية المختلفة على مصداقية الاتصال.
					29. تتجنب منظمتنا استخدام الرسائل المضللة أو التلاعبية للحفاظ على المصداقية والثقة.

					30. نضمن أن يسهم اتصال الموظفين في دعم وتعزيز مصداقية المنظمة.
					31. تُعتبر منظمتنا جديرة بالثقة في تقديم معلومات صادقة وموثوقة في رسائلها العامة.
					32. تراقب منظمتنا وتتعامل مع المخاطر المحتملة المتعلقة بالمصداقية في سياقات الاتصال عالية الأهمية.
<b>الاستجابة</b>					
					33. توفر منظمتنا ردودًا آنية و عفوية على اهتمامات أصحاب المصلحة.
					34. نخرط بنشاط في حوار تفاعلي مع أصحاب المصلحة عبر قنوات اتصال متنوعة.
					35. لدينا إجراءات وأنظمة لضمان استجابة متسقة لاستفسارات أصحاب المصلحة.
					36. تُظهر منظمتنا التزامًا مستمرًا بالحوار والتجاوب مع جمهورها.
					37. تستجيب منظمتنا لاحتياجات ومخاوف الجمهور في رسائلها العامة.
					38. نُكيّف ممارسات الاستجابة بما يتناسب مع خصائص وتوقعات المنصات الإعلامية المختلفة.
					39. نتجنب الردود المضللة أو التلاعبية، حتى عند معالجة قضايا حساسة.
					40. نقدّم للموظفين إرشادات تساعد على الاستجابة بشكل مناسب ومتسق لمخاوف أصحاب المصلحة.
					41. نراقب ونعالج مخاطر الاستجابة عند التواصل في مواقف عالية الأهمية.
					42. يشعر الموظفون أن اهتماماتهم مسموعة ويتم التعامل معها في الوقت المناسب من قبل المنظمة.
<b>الشرعية</b>					
<b>الشرعية المعرفية</b>					
					43. تحظى منظمتنا بقبول عام في بيئتها.
					44. تؤدي منظمتنا دورًا ضروريًا في بيئتها.
					45. تُعترف منظمتنا على نطاق واسع كفاعل راسخ في بيئتها.
<b>الشرعية الاجتماعية-السياسية</b>					
					46. تتسق أنشطة هذه المنظمة مع القيم والأعراف الاجتماعية السائدة.
					47. تتماشى أهداف هذه المنظمة مع قيم المجتمع.
					48. تسهم المنظمة بشكل إيجابي في المجتمع.
					49. تتوافق أفعال المنظمة مع ما يتوقعه المجتمع.
<b>الإدراك بالملاءمة والقبول الاجتماعي</b>					
					50. تحظى منظمتنا بصورة مناسبة ضمن النظام الاجتماعي الذي تعمل فيه.
					51. يرى المجتمع أن المنظمة تتصرف على نحو سليم.
					52. يعتبر المجتمع أن المنظمة ضرورية.
					53. يرى المجتمع أن المنظمة تفي بالتزاماتها ومسؤولياتها.
					54. يعتبر المجتمع أن المنظمة مقبولة اجتماعيًا.
<b>السمعة</b>					
<b>الحكم العام على السمعة</b>					

					55. تتمتع منظمنا بسمعة جيدة.
					56. تُحظى منظمنا بتقدير إيجابي.
					57. تُعتبر منظمنا محل تقدير حسن.
					58. تُحظى منظمنا بمكانة رفيعة.
<b>السمعة المتصورة تنظيمياً (الرؤية الداخلية)</b>					
					59. لدي انطباع إيجابي عن منظمتي.
					60. أكن الاحترام لمنظمتي.
					61. يُنظر إلى منظمنا بإيجابية من قبل الجمهور.
<b>وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتأثير الاتصال على السمعة</b>					
					62. يُحسن حضور المنظمة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من سمعتها.
					63. يعزز حضور المنظمة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي صورتها.
					64. يؤثر تواصل المنظمة إيجابياً على سمعتها الخارجية.
					65. تسهم ممارسات الاتصال في تعزيز كيفية إدراك المجتمع للمنظمة.
<b>استخدام المؤثرين والمشاهير</b>					
<b>العلاقة الشبه-اجتماعية</b>					
					66. أتطلع إلى مشاهدة المؤثر على قناته.
					67. إذا ظهر المؤثر في قناة يوتيوب أخرى فساأشاهد ذلك الفيديو.
					68. عندما أشاهد المؤثر أشعر وكأنني جزء من مجموعته.
					69. أعتقد أن المؤثر يشبه صديقاً قديماً.
					70. أود لقاء المؤثر شخصياً.
					71. إذا نُشرت قصة عن المؤثر في صحيفة أو مجلة فساقرأها.
					72. يجعلني المؤثر أشعر بالارتياح وكأنني مع أصدقاء.
					73. عندما يُظهر المؤثر رأيه في العلامة التجارية يساعدني ذلك في تكوين رأيي الخاص حولها.
<b>العلاقة الثقة والمصادقية</b>					
					74. أشعر أن المؤثر صادق.
					75. أعتبر المؤثر جديراً بالثقة.
					76. أشعر أن المؤثر يقول الحقيقة.
					77. أعتبر المؤثر مخلصاً.
					78. أشعر أن المؤثر يمتلك معرفة واسعة بالخدمة.
					79. أشعر أن المؤثر كفؤ لتقديم آراء حول الخدمة.
					80. أعتبر أن المؤثر يمتلك خبرة كافية للإدلاء بآراء حول الخدمة.
					81. أعتبر المؤثر خبيراً في الخدمة.
					82. لدي قواسم مشتركة عديدة مع المؤثر.
					83. أشعر أنني أشبه المؤثر إلى حد كبير.

					84. أستطيع بسهولة أن أتعرف على نفسي من خلال المؤثر.
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### Appendix C: Person Correlation result (Validity of the study)

Constructs	Narrative Framing	Audience Targeting	Message Consistency	Credibility and Trust	Responsiveness	Cognitive Legitimacy	Sociopolitical Legitimacy	Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance	Generalized Reputation Judgment	Perceived Organizational Reputation	Social media and Communication	Parasocial Relationship
Audience Targeting	.699** (0.000)											
Message Consistency	.708** (0.000)	.796** (0.000)										
Credibility and Trust	.802** (0.000)	.539** (0.002)	.710** (0.000)									
Responsiveness	.569** (0.001)	.398* (0.029)	.521** (0.003)	.644** (0.000)								
Cognitive Legitimacy	.513** (0.004)	.590** (0.001)	.709** (0.000)	.608** (0.000)	.392* (0.032)							
Sociopolitical Legitimacy	.651** (0.000)	.536** (0.002)	.618** (0.000)	.710** (0.000)	.545** (0.002)	.377* (0.040)						
Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance	.819** (0.000)	.665** (0.000)	.672** (0.000)	.781** (0.000)	.561** (0.001)	.647** (0.000)	.695** (0.000)					
Generalized Reputation Judgment	.685** (0.000)	.478** (0.008)	.581** (0.001)	.788** (0.000)	.496** (0.005)	.763** (0.000)	0.335 (0.071)	.747** (0.000)				
Perceived Organizational Reputation	.737** (0.000)	.523** (0.003)	.447* (0.013)	.505** (0.004)	0.277 (0.139)	.562** (0.001)	0.295 (0.114)	.777** (0.000)	.715** (0.000)			
Social media and Communication	.741** (0.000)	.431* (0.017)	.396* (0.030)	.580** (0.001)	.431* (0.018)	.402* (0.027)	.545** (0.002)	.784** (0.000)	.506** (0.004)	.784** (0.000)		
Parasocial Relationship	.652** (0.000)	.445* (0.014)	.394* (0.031)	.534** (0.000)	0.222 (0.238)	.569** (0.000)	0.278 (0.138)	.733** (0.000)	.770** (0.000)	.832** (0.000)	.647** (0.000)	
Perceived Influencer Credibility	.764** (0.000)	.441* (0.015)	.428* (0.018)	.677** (0.000)	.381* (0.038)	.603** (0.000)	.367* (0.046)	.802** (0.000)	.867** (0.000)	.925** (0.000)	.766** (0.000)	.901** (0.000)

- \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
- Values within the inner model indicate the Sig. (2-tailed), while values in the outer model denote the Pearson Correlation.

**Appendix D: Cronbach's Alpha results (reliability of the study)**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Narrative Framing</b>	<b>Audience Targeting</b>	<b>Message Consistency</b>	<b>Credibility and Trust</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>Cognitive Legitimacy</b>	<b>Sociopolitical Legitimacy</b>	<b>Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance</b>	<b>Generalized Reputation Judgment</b>	<b>Perceived Organizational Reputation</b>	<b>Social media and Communication</b>	<b>Parasocial Relationship</b>
Audience Targeting	0.699											
Message Consistency	0.708	0.796										
Credibility and Trust	0.802	0.539	0.71									
Responsiveness	0.569	0.398	0.521	0.644								
Cognitive Legitimacy	0.513	0.59	0.709	0.608	0.392							
Sociopolitical Legitimacy	0.651	0.536	0.618	0.71	0.545	0.377						
Perceived Appropriateness and Social Acceptance	0.819	0.665	0.672	0.781	0.561	0.647	0.695					
Generalized Reputation Judgment	0.685	0.478	0.581	0.788	0.496	0.763	0.335	0.747				
Perceived Organizational Reputation	0.737	0.523	0.447	0.505	0.277	0.562	0.295	0.777	0.715			
Social Media and Communication	0.741	0.431	0.396	0.58	0.431	0.402	0.545	0.784	0.506	0.784		
Parasocial Relationship	0.652	0.445	0.394	0.534	0.222	0.569	0.278	0.733	0.77	0.832	0.647	
Perceived Influencer Credibility	0.764	0.441	0.428	0.677	0.381	0.603	0.367	0.802	0.867	0.925	0.766	0.901

## Appendix E: Result of Normality

Normality Result			Skewness		Kurtosis		
Construct	Q.#	N	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	
OCS	NF	NF1	304	-1.364	0.140	2.150	0.279
		NF2	304	-0.696	0.140	-0.021	0.279
		NF3	304	-0.764	0.140	1.534	0.279
		NF4	304	-0.931	0.140	0.990	0.279
		NF5	304	-0.496	0.140	-0.056	0.279
		NF6	304	-0.634	0.140	0.512	0.279
		NF7	304	-0.797	0.140	0.116	0.279
		NF8	304	-0.653	0.140	0.446	0.279
	AT	AT1	304	-0.971	0.140	1.077	0.279
		AT2	304	-1.052	0.140	1.676	0.279
		AT3	304	-0.545	0.140	0.547	0.279
		AT4	304	-0.857	0.140	0.624	0.279
		AT5	304	-0.997	0.140	1.919	0.279
		AT6	304	-1.136	0.140	2.024	0.279
		AT7	304	-0.845	0.140	0.775	0.279
		AT8	304	-0.687	0.140	0.196	0.279
	MC	MC1	304	-1.125	0.140	3.446	0.279
		MC2	304	-0.899	0.140	1.984	0.279
		MC3	304	-0.922	0.140	0.866	0.279
		MC4	304	-0.713	0.140	0.613	0.279
		MC5	304	-1.035	0.140	1.759	0.279
		MC6	304	-1.129	0.140	2.360	0.279
		MC7	304	-1.092	0.140	1.739	0.279
	CT	CT1	304	-0.989	0.140	0.658	0.279
		CT2	304	-1.048	0.140	1.265	0.279
		CT3	304	-1.052	0.140	0.968	0.279
		CT4	304	-0.751	0.140	0.590	0.279
		CT5	304	-0.722	0.140	0.670	0.279
		CT6	304	-1.273	0.140	2.181	0.279
		CT7	304	-0.765	0.140	0.658	0.279
CT8		304	-0.878	0.140	1.641	0.279	
CT9		304	-0.979	0.140	1.432	0.279	
RES	RES1	304	-0.936	0.140	0.887	0.279	
	RES2	304	-0.788	0.140	0.719	0.279	
	RES3	304	-0.928	0.140	0.693	0.279	
	RES4	304	-0.915	0.140	1.150	0.279	
	RES5	304	-0.732	0.140	0.095	0.279	
	RES6	304	-0.654	0.140	-0.139	0.279	
	RES7	304	-0.930	0.140	0.568	0.279	
	RES8	304	-1.024	0.140	1.651	0.279	
	RES9	304	-0.664	0.140	1.226	0.279	
	RES10	304	-0.978	0.140	0.982	0.279	

<b>LEG</b>	<b>CL</b>	CL1	304	-0.958	0.140	0.781	0.279	
		CL2	304	-0.930	0.140	-0.076	0.279	
		CL3	304	-0.806	0.140	-0.255	0.279	
	<b>SOL</b>	SOL1	304	-0.900	0.140	0.218	0.279	
		SOL2	304	-1.066	0.140	1.257	0.279	
		SOL3	304	-0.888	0.140	0.543	0.279	
		SOL4	304	-0.884	0.140	1.389	0.279	
	<b>PASA</b>	PASA1	304	-0.778	0.140	0.896	0.279	
		PASA2	304	-0.828	0.140	0.529	0.279	
		PASA3	304	-0.737	0.140	-0.454	0.279	
		PASA4	304	-0.831	0.140	0.836	0.279	
		PASA5	304	-0.797	0.140	0.422	0.279	
	<b>REP</b>	<b>GRJ</b>	GRJ1	304	-0.722	0.140	0.145	0.279
			GRJ2	304	-1.052	0.140	1.631	0.279
			GRJ3	304	-1.261	0.140	2.839	0.279
GRJ4			304	-1.142	0.140	2.523	0.279	
<b>POR</b>		POR1	304	-1.379	0.140	3.177	0.279	
		POR2	304	-1.439	0.140	3.179	0.279	
		POR3	304	-0.987	0.140	1.207	0.279	
<b>SMCI</b>		SMCI1	304	-1.039	0.140	1.082	0.279	
		SMCI2	304	-1.063	0.140	1.643	0.279	
		SMCI3	304	-0.967	0.140	1.234	0.279	
		SMCI4	304	-0.954	0.140	0.480	0.279	
<b>UIC</b>		<b>PR</b>	PR1	304	-0.211	0.140	-0.812	0.279
			PR2	304	-0.171	0.140	-0.831	0.279
			PR3	304	-0.065	0.140	-0.961	0.279
	PR4		304	-0.032	0.140	-0.967	0.279	
	PR5		304	-0.055	0.140	-0.892	0.279	
	PR6		304	-0.166	0.140	-0.880	0.279	
	PR7		304	-0.020	0.140	-0.957	0.279	
	PR8		304	-0.227	0.140	-0.796	0.279	
	<b>PIC</b>	PIC1	304	-0.086	0.140	-0.912	0.279	
		PIC2	304	-0.130	0.140	-0.862	0.279	
		PIC3	304	-0.051	0.140	-0.830	0.279	
		PIC4	304	-0.090	0.140	-0.760	0.279	
		PIC5	304	-0.080	0.140	-0.983	0.279	
		PIC6	304	-0.067	0.140	-0.966	0.279	
		PIC7	304	-0.012	0.140	-1.047	0.279	
		PIC8	304	0.083	0.140	-1.052	0.279	
		PIC9	304	0.058	0.140	-0.914	0.279	
		PIC10	304	0.192	0.140	-0.954	0.279	
		PIC11	304	0.076	0.140	-1.008	0.279	

## Appendix F: Result of Outer Loading

Construct		Questions	Outer Loading
<b>→ First Order</b>			
<b>OCS</b>	<b>NF</b>	NF1	0.751
		NF2	0.743
		NF3	0.775
		NF4	0.781
		NF5	0.798
		NF6	0.804
		NF7	0.770
		NF8	0.796
	<b>AT</b>	AT1	0.827
		AT2	0.840
		AT3	0.779
		AT4	0.769
		AT5	0.827
		AT6	0.781
		AT7	0.801
		AT8	0.756
	<b>MC</b>	MC1	0.817
		MC2	0.813
		MC3	0.813
		MC4	0.767
		MC5	0.855
		MC6	0.801
		MC7	0.800
	<b>CT</b>	CT1	0.776
		CT2	0.882
		CT3	0.822
		CT4	0.870
		CT5	0.850
		CT6	0.761
		CT7	0.887
CT8		0.836	
CT9		0.798	
<b>RES</b>	RES1	0.635	
	RES2	0.696	
	RES3	0.822	
	RES4	0.785	
	RES5	0.656	
	RES6	0.751	
	RES7	0.820	
	RES8	0.837	
	RES9	0.835	
	RES10	0.763	
<b>LEG</b>	<b>CL</b>	CL1	0.881
		CL2	0.955
		CL3	0.95
	<b>SOL</b>	SOL1	0.921
		SOL2	0.949
		SOL3	0.929

		SOL4	0.879
	<b>PASA</b>	PASA1	0.893
		PASA2	0.876
		PASA3	0.829
		PASA4	0.820
		PASA5	0.830
<b>REP</b>	<b>GRJ</b>	GRJ1	0.927
		GRJ2	0.885
		GRJ3	0.921
		GRJ4	0.921
	<b>POR</b>	POR1	0.931
		POR2	0.863
		POR3	0.832
	<b>SMCI</b>	SMCI1	0.869
		SMCI2	0.908
		SMCI3	0.874
SMCI4		0.762	
<b>UIC</b>	<b>PR</b>	PR1	0.888
		PR2	0.903
		PR3	0.938
		PR4	0.923
		PR5	0.912
		PR6	0.907
		PR7	0.949
		PR8	0.890
	<b>PIC</b>	PIC1	0.931
		PIC2	0.938
		PIC3	0.957
		PIC4	0.950
		PIC5	0.958
		PIC6	0.958
		PIC7	0.959
		PIC8	0.951
		PIC9	0.928
		PIC10	0.917
		PIC11	0.928
<b>→ Second Order</b>			
<b>OCS</b>	NF	0.899	
	AT	0.898	
	MC	0.918	
	CT	0.883	
	RES	0.887	
<b>LEG</b>	CL	0.943	
	SOL	0.962	
	PASA	0.941	
<b>REP</b>	GRJ	0.924	
	POR	0.954	
	SMCI	0.903	
<b>UIC</b>	PR	0.971	
	PIC	0.969	

**Appendix G: Fornell-Larcker criterion (1st Order)**

<b>Fronell</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>CL</b>	<b>CT</b>	<b>GRJ</b>	<b>LEG</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>NF</b>	<b>OCS</b>	<b>PASA</b>	<b>PIC</b>	<b>POR</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>REP</b>	<b>RES</b>	<b>SMCI</b>	<b>SOL</b>	<b>UIC</b>
<b>AT</b>	0.798																
<b>CL</b>	0.437	0.929															
<b>CT</b>	0.671	0.617	0.832														
<b>GRJ</b>	0.637	0.602	0.663	0.922													
<b>LEG</b>	0.574	0.930	0.738	0.722	0.848												
<b>MC</b>	0.854	0.470	0.757	0.625	0.600	0.810											
<b>NF</b>	0.782	0.603	0.756	0.706	0.726	0.770	0.778										
<b>OCS</b>	0.887	0.637	0.895	0.747	0.773	0.909	0.894	0.712									
<b>PASA</b>	0.610	0.813	0.759	0.767	0.950	0.630	0.747	0.792	0.850								
<b>PIC</b>	0.395	0.195	0.278	0.307	0.262	0.436	0.333	0.433	0.290	0.943							
<b>POR</b>	0.637	0.602	0.739	0.849	0.715	0.648	0.750	0.787	0.744	0.266	0.876						
<b>PR</b>	0.405	0.246	0.278	0.377	0.308	0.416	0.385	0.446	0.325	0.882	0.335	0.914					
<b>REP</b>	0.661	0.643	0.754	0.935	0.768	0.671	0.764	0.815	0.800	0.330	0.944	0.421	0.820				
<b>RES</b>	0.738	0.652	0.759	0.691	0.759	0.752	0.715	0.895	0.751	0.516	0.716	0.527	0.763	0.763			
<b>SMCI</b>	0.563	0.582	0.703	0.719	0.694	0.594	0.673	0.736	0.707	0.337	0.798	0.453	0.900	0.716	0.855		
<b>SOL</b>	0.553	0.874	0.697	0.659	0.964	0.577	0.691	0.741	0.863	0.244	0.662	0.292	0.714	0.739	0.663	0.920	
<b>UIC</b>	0.411	0.223	0.287	0.346	0.290	0.441	0.365	0.452	0.314	0.980	0.304	0.959	0.379	0.537	0.397	0.272	0.904

**Appendix H: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (1st Order)**

HTMT	AT	CL	CT	GRJ	LEG	MC	NF	OCS	PASA	PIC	POR	PR	REP	RES	SMCI	SOL	UIC
<b>AT</b>																	
<b>CL</b>	0.475																
<b>CT</b>	0.711	0.667															
<b>GRJ</b>	0.683	0.647	0.703														
<b>LEG</b>	0.612	0.985	0.782	0.763													
<b>MC</b>	0.927	0.512	0.810	0.673	0.641												
<b>NF</b>	0.851	0.662	0.817	0.763	0.782	0.841											
<b>OCS</b>	0.941	0.667	0.923	0.777	0.795	0.965	0.948										
<b>PASA</b>	0.671	0.879	0.829	0.835	1.016	0.693	0.829	0.841									
<b>PIC</b>	0.413	0.206	0.286	0.318	0.269	0.459	0.349	0.446	0.301								
<b>POR</b>	0.717	0.683	0.825	0.950	0.796	0.734	0.853	0.860	0.855	0.292							
<b>PR</b>	0.428	0.264	0.290	0.396	0.320	0.441	0.407	0.463	0.343	0.900	0.371						
<b>REP</b>	0.703	0.690	0.794	0.984	0.808	0.716	0.820	0.842	0.866	0.346	1.049	0.448					
<b>RES</b>	0.797	0.711	0.809	0.744	0.807	0.812	0.777	0.941	0.819	0.545	0.81	0.564	0.82				
<b>SMCI</b>	0.621	0.654	0.767	0.791	0.761	0.657	0.750	0.790	0.797	0.372	0.923	0.505	0.993	0.806			
<b>SOL</b>	0.593	0.940	0.743	0.701	1.009	0.621	0.750	0.769	0.927	0.255	0.743	0.308	0.757	0.794	0.733		
<b>UIC</b>	0.430	0.236	0.295	0.360	0.298	0.464	0.382	0.465	0.327	0.992	0.333	0.978	0.398	0.567	0.438	0.284	

**Appendix I: Fornell-Larcker criterion (2nd Order)**

<b>Fronell</b>	<b>LEG</b>	<b>OCS</b>	<b>REP</b>	<b>UIC</b>
<b>LEG</b>	0.949			
<b>OCS</b>	0.752	0.897		
<b>REP</b>	0.757	0.810	0.927	
<b>UIC</b>	0.289	0.456	0.384	0.97

**Appendix J: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (2nd Order)**

<b>HTMT</b>	<b>LEG</b>	<b>OCS</b>	<b>REP</b>	<b>UIC</b>
<b>LEG</b>				
<b>OCS</b>	0.793			
<b>REP</b>	0.812	0.869		
<b>UIC</b>	0.307	0.486	0.415	

### Appendix K: Cross-Loading Result

Construct	Q.#	NF	AT	MC	CT	RES	CL	SOL	PASA	GRJ	POR	SMCI	PR	PIC	
OCS	NF	NF1	0.751	0.501	0.477	0.610	0.514	0.632	0.696	0.659	0.616	0.651	0.567	0.197	0.133
		NF2	0.743	0.521	0.547	0.567	0.453	0.436	0.490	0.543	0.419	0.508	0.401	0.260	0.254
		NF3	0.775	0.620	0.622	0.608	0.625	0.405	0.525	0.565	0.548	0.599	0.597	0.456	0.404
		NF4	0.781	0.576	0.571	0.691	0.559	0.496	0.579	0.668	0.569	0.628	0.557	0.168	0.133
		NF5	0.798	0.625	0.643	0.626	0.529	0.438	0.465	0.592	0.528	0.577	0.523	0.232	0.192
		NF6	0.804	0.673	0.643	0.490	0.563	0.401	0.466	0.489	0.504	0.512	0.452	0.341	0.312
		NF7	0.770	0.606	0.573	0.506	0.496	0.467	0.492	0.518	0.597	0.564	0.464	0.290	0.239
		NF8	0.796	0.718	0.689	0.597	0.681	0.488	0.588	0.612	0.604	0.621	0.604	0.425	0.383
	AT	AT1	0.663	0.827	0.662	0.497	0.589	0.380	0.451	0.496	0.551	0.554	0.496	0.385	0.355
		AT2	0.628	0.840	0.679	0.484	0.575	0.356	0.442	0.477	0.582	0.552	0.485	0.374	0.352
		AT3	0.652	0.779	0.646	0.466	0.500	0.350	0.410	0.470	0.491	0.462	0.429	0.273	0.220
		AT4	0.612	0.769	0.550	0.453	0.553	0.384	0.448	0.498	0.538	0.507	0.395	0.215	0.150
		AT5	0.725	0.827	0.747	0.681	0.668	0.430	0.557	0.575	0.608	0.622	0.553	0.313	0.292
		AT6	0.591	0.781	0.687	0.592	0.613	0.349	0.460	0.494	0.485	0.505	0.397	0.268	0.283
		AT7	0.584	0.801	0.766	0.599	0.636	0.273	0.391	0.460	0.432	0.468	0.462	0.390	0.425
		AT8	0.524	0.756	0.693	0.479	0.558	0.261	0.350	0.413	0.363	0.371	0.355	0.361	0.432
	MC	MC1	0.670	0.730	0.817	0.619	0.710	0.469	0.560	0.562	0.567	0.611	0.544	0.349	0.391
		MC2	0.569	0.720	0.813	0.540	0.625	0.292	0.420	0.452	0.480	0.485	0.410	0.321	0.346
		MC3	0.631	0.673	0.813	0.558	0.573	0.369	0.413	0.460	0.520	0.519	0.442	0.376	0.398
		MC4	0.606	0.585	0.767	0.598	0.469	0.385	0.444	0.527	0.450	0.450	0.409	0.198	0.211
		MC5	0.642	0.779	0.855	0.611	0.652	0.322	0.429	0.514	0.502	0.511	0.507	0.439	0.464
		MC6	0.568	0.675	0.801	0.559	0.595	0.309	0.409	0.419	0.474	0.501	0.470	0.456	0.440
		MC7	0.666	0.664	0.800	0.788	0.615	0.504	0.578	0.623	0.540	0.581	0.565	0.215	0.218
	CT	CT1	0.614	0.483	0.586	0.776	0.670	0.663	0.685	0.672	0.552	0.591	0.598	0.335	0.299
		CT2	0.642	0.642	0.681	0.882	0.677	0.481	0.577	0.618	0.598	0.665	0.600	0.233	0.243
		CT3	0.588	0.490	0.594	0.822	0.568	0.441	0.553	0.602	0.515	0.572	0.611	0.213	0.224
		CT4	0.636	0.624	0.649	0.870	0.665	0.456	0.531	0.671	0.593	0.644	0.594	0.256	0.275
		CT5	0.651	0.595	0.669	0.850	0.599	0.512	0.542	0.605	0.543	0.571	0.563	0.212	0.213
		CT6	0.625	0.430	0.515	0.761	0.524	0.632	0.608	0.620	0.563	0.628	0.511	0.137	0.097
		CT7	0.671	0.598	0.716	0.887	0.641	0.498	0.614	0.676	0.552	0.676	0.629	0.273	0.276
		CT8	0.601	0.491	0.559	0.836	0.621	0.468	0.549	0.598	0.501	0.588	0.590	0.224	0.213
		CT9	0.631	0.638	0.674	0.798	0.703	0.496	0.578	0.621	0.544	0.599	0.568	0.190	0.223
	RES	RES1	0.455	0.482	0.506	0.578	0.635	0.313	0.419	0.481	0.402	0.451	0.508	0.315	0.350
		RES2	0.529	0.605	0.594	0.691	0.696	0.372	0.473	0.555	0.474	0.534	0.483	0.237	0.293
		RES3	0.586	0.594	0.579	0.572	0.822	0.580	0.643	0.588	0.571	0.522	0.539	0.438	0.417
		RES4	0.543	0.606	0.633	0.572	0.785	0.449	0.537	0.545	0.569	0.564	0.586	0.359	0.352
RES5		0.478	0.426	0.405	0.438	0.656	0.537	0.485	0.532	0.534	0.498	0.483	0.364	0.290	
RES6		0.521	0.507	0.523	0.411	0.751	0.477	0.488	0.487	0.494	0.481	0.575	0.650	0.610	
RES7		0.565	0.500	0.523	0.579	0.820	0.585	0.669	0.613	0.553	0.593	0.625	0.416	0.360	
RES8		0.533	0.610	0.659	0.588	0.837	0.462	0.561	0.572	0.542	0.577	0.581	0.501	0.512	
RES9		0.674	0.655	0.679	0.675	0.835	0.592	0.661	0.669	0.590	0.630	0.571	0.373	0.365	

		RES10	0.544	0.603	0.582	0.640	0.763	0.592	0.663	0.663	0.535	0.587	0.516	0.391	0.402	
<b>LEG</b>	<b>CL</b>	CL1	0.507	0.409	0.473	0.583	0.659	0.881	0.785	0.731	0.572	0.577	0.601	0.318	0.295	
		CL2	0.568	0.382	0.399	0.539	0.553	0.955	0.819	0.749	0.539	0.532	0.492	0.172	0.109	
		CL3	0.601	0.427	0.439	0.597	0.607	0.948	0.831	0.785	0.566	0.569	0.533	0.202	0.144	
	<b>SOL</b>	SOL1	0.622	0.445	0.460	0.635	0.629	0.869	0.921	0.796	0.564	0.575	0.600	0.231	0.158	
		SOL2	0.626	0.511	0.530	0.625	0.695	0.806	0.949	0.785	0.628	0.600	0.634	0.331	0.249	
		SOL3	0.659	0.521	0.552	0.675	0.656	0.834	0.929	0.788	0.608	0.649	0.612	0.232	0.185	
		SOL4	0.636	0.561	0.585	0.630	0.744	0.703	0.879	0.809	0.626	0.614	0.592	0.282	0.313	
	<b>PASA</b>	PASA1	0.672	0.564	0.599	0.674	0.709	0.761	0.855	0.893	0.680	0.653	0.613	0.319	0.294	
		PASA2	0.615	0.539	0.573	0.634	0.727	0.711	0.797	0.876	0.681	0.646	0.659	0.387	0.402	
		PASA3	0.566	0.413	0.417	0.519	0.580	0.856	0.761	0.829	0.539	0.511	0.481	0.240	0.182	
		PASA4	0.639	0.570	0.585	0.743	0.612	0.489	0.608	0.820	0.682	0.693	0.666	0.263	0.234	
		PASA5	0.699	0.521	0.515	0.684	0.550	0.590	0.608	0.830	0.694	0.686	0.603	0.154	0.099	
	<b>REP</b>	<b>GRJ</b>	GRJ1	0.663	0.577	0.552	0.609	0.682	0.587	0.655	0.758	0.920	0.780	0.704	0.351	0.289
			GRJ2	0.628	0.613	0.567	0.565	0.614	0.488	0.553	0.675	0.938	0.756	0.592	0.375	0.338
			GRJ3	0.679	0.612	0.601	0.660	0.656	0.584	0.629	0.725	0.936	0.792	0.657	0.285	0.235
GRJ4			0.632	0.547	0.585	0.608	0.596	0.557	0.590	0.668	0.894	0.803	0.696	0.381	0.271	
<b>POR</b>		POR1	0.712	0.587	0.574	0.663	0.653	0.537	0.582	0.634	0.748	0.931	0.713	0.316	0.233	
		POR2	0.585	0.523	0.549	0.521	0.604	0.523	0.568	0.550	0.707	0.863	0.667	0.335	0.251	
		POR3	0.670	0.561	0.578	0.753	0.623	0.521	0.589	0.768	0.775	0.832	0.714	0.231	0.218	
<b>SMCI</b>		SMCI1	0.654	0.511	0.565	0.736	0.583	0.515	0.609	0.665	0.610	0.737	0.869	0.274	0.196	
		SMCI2	0.593	0.497	0.509	0.663	0.605	0.505	0.560	0.657	0.649	0.732	0.908	0.313	0.217	
		SMCI3	0.563	0.537	0.569	0.573	0.639	0.454	0.552	0.562	0.633	0.682	0.874	0.393	0.304	
		SMCI4	0.483	0.370	0.374	0.408	0.632	0.526	0.547	0.525	0.565	0.564	0.762	0.607	0.467	
<b>UIC</b>		<b>PR</b>	PR1	0.417	0.400	0.409	0.325	0.558	0.320	0.351	0.384	0.423	0.386	0.501	0.888	0.739
			PR2	0.377	0.369	0.383	0.290	0.514	0.265	0.320	0.325	0.372	0.351	0.457	0.903	0.776
			PR3	0.357	0.384	0.391	0.240	0.471	0.219	0.243	0.292	0.348	0.296	0.406	0.938	0.810
			PR4	0.336	0.388	0.389	0.240	0.470	0.183	0.243	0.279	0.328	0.273	0.383	0.923	0.820
	PR5		0.307	0.359	0.357	0.207	0.414	0.159	0.208	0.246	0.273	0.240	0.351	0.912	0.820	
	PR6		0.297	0.287	0.318	0.187	0.420	0.209	0.227	0.242	0.328	0.274	0.384	0.907	0.781	
	PR7		0.356	0.392	0.409	0.277	0.508	0.207	0.254	0.295	0.345	0.294	0.407	0.949	0.871	
	PR8		0.369	0.382	0.385	0.270	0.501	0.247	0.298	0.322	0.348	0.342	0.433	0.890	0.827	
	<b>PIC</b>	PIC1	0.297	0.338	0.379	0.229	0.464	0.185	0.237	0.250	0.284	0.242	0.342	0.872	0.931	
		PIC2	0.313	0.356	0.400	0.262	0.486	0.188	0.253	0.258	0.275	0.253	0.351	0.868	0.938	
		PIC3	0.339	0.402	0.437	0.295	0.523	0.210	0.256	0.296	0.306	0.291	0.344	0.837	0.957	
		PIC4	0.314	0.366	0.415	0.265	0.491	0.174	0.220	0.265	0.278	0.269	0.310	0.821	0.950	
		PIC5	0.322	0.373	0.425	0.281	0.505	0.188	0.240	0.295	0.297	0.262	0.318	0.813	0.958	
		PIC6	0.342	0.388	0.423	0.284	0.523	0.217	0.260	0.312	0.322	0.281	0.343	0.829	0.958	
		PIC7	0.334	0.384	0.416	0.275	0.512	0.204	0.248	0.306	0.294	0.258	0.318	0.817	0.959	
		PIC8	0.295	0.354	0.409	0.258	0.457	0.158	0.209	0.267	0.271	0.243	0.308	0.821	0.951	
		PIC9	0.310	0.378	0.403	0.244	0.474	0.197	0.223	0.266	0.296	0.230	0.294	0.835	0.928	
		PIC10	0.310	0.402	0.426	0.271	0.483	0.166	0.222	0.266	0.303	0.238	0.304	0.817	0.917	
		PIC11	0.283	0.355	0.396	0.218	0.437	0.131	0.166	0.229	0.253	0.196	0.263	0.824	0.928	

**Appendix L: Result of Collinearity Statistics (VIF) for Indicators**

<b>Construct</b>		<b>Questions</b>	<b>IVF</b>
<b>OCS</b>	<b>NF</b>	NF1	2.134
		NF2	1.932
		NF3	2.043
		NF4	2.408
		NF5	2.312
		NF6	2.886
		NF7	2.584
		NF8	2.249
	<b>AT</b>	AT1	2.66
		AT2	3.773
		AT3	2.413
		AT4	2.554
		AT5	2.560
		AT6	2.256
		AT7	3.167
		AT8	2.471
	<b>MC</b>	MC1	2.395
		MC2	2.274
		MC3	2.596
		MC4	2.428
		MC5	2.782
		MC6	2.313
		MC7	2.142
	<b>CT</b>	CT1	2.227
		CT2	3.634
		CT3	2.987
		CT4	3.858
		CT5	3.198
		CT6	2.457
		CT7	3.942
		CT8	2.986
		CT9	2.500
	<b>RES</b>	RES1	1.929
		RES2	2.294
		RES3	2.738
		RES4	2.499
RES5		1.911	
RES6		2.599	
RES7		2.857	
RES8		3.107	
RES9		2.765	

		RES10	2.121
<b>LEG</b>	<b>CL</b>	CL1	2.288
		CL2	6.477
		CL3	6.08
	<b>SOL</b>	SOL1	4.274
		SOL2	5.843
		SOL3	4.197
		SOL4	2.782
	<b>PASA</b>	PASA1	3.441
		PASA2	3.064
		PASA3	2.512
		PASA4	3.217
PASA5		3.142	
<b>REP</b>	<b>GRJ</b>	GRJ1	3.767
		GRJ2	5.771
		GRJ3	4.855
		GRJ4	2.928
	<b>POR</b>	POR1	3.310
		POR2	2.465
		POR3	1.812
	<b>SMCI</b>	SMCI1	3.400
		SMCI2	3.723
		SMCI3	2.492
		SMCI4	1.883
<b>UIC</b>	<b>PR</b>	PR1	5.166
		PR2	5.369
		PR3	7.374
		PR4	7.188
		PR5	5.083
		PR6	4.874
		PR7	8.537
		PR8	4.192
	<b>PIC</b>	PIC1	10.704
		PIC2	10.942
		PIC3	14.280
		PIC4	11.699
		PIC5	15.020
		PIC6	14.720
		PIC7	16.145
		PIC8	10.921
		PIC9	9.302
PIC10	9.934		
PIC11	8.720		

تأثير الاتصال الاستراتيجي على سمعة وشرعية الشركات الكبرى: الدور الوسيط للمشاهير  
والمؤثرين.

عوض سمير عوض دعبس

الدكتور حسام الشمري،

الدكتور أيمن العرموطي،

الدكتور جون ليبينسكي.

## ملخص

الخلفية: في البيئات الهشة وغير المستقرة سياسياً مثل فلسطين، تواجه المؤسسات تحديات كبيرة في بناء الشرعية والحفاظ على السمعة الإيجابية لدى أصحاب المصلحة. تؤدي الاضطرابات السياسية المتكررة والقيود الاقتصادية وضعف المؤسسات إلى بيئة يكون فيها الثقة العامة متقلبة ويصعب الحفاظ عليها. وتعدّ الاتصالات الاستراتيجية، بما في ذلك التخطيط المعتمد للرسائل والانخراط العام، أداة حاسمة في التعامل مع هذه التحديات. تبحث هذه الرسالة في كيفية تأثير جهود الاتصال الاستراتيجي على الشرعية المتصورة والسمعة المؤسسية للشركات الفلسطينية المتوسطة والكبيرة.

المنهجية: وقد أُجري مسح كمي مقطعي باستخدام استبيانات منظمة وُزعت على شركات متوسطة وكبيرة الحجم في فلسطين، وجمعت البيانات المتعلقة بممارسات الاتصال المؤسسي وانطباعات أصحاب المصلحة حول الشرعية والسمعة. وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية باستخدام المربعات الصغرى الجزئية (PLS-SEM) لاختبار النموذج المقترح الذي يربط استراتيجيات الاتصال بشرعية وسمعة المؤسسات، وفحص الدور التعديلي للمؤثرين والمشاهير.

النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن استراتيجيات الاتصال التنظيمي الرئيسية، مثل بناء السرد، استهداف الجمهور، الاتساق في الرسائل، المصداقية والثقة، وسرعة الاستجابة، تؤثر بشكل إيجابي وذو دلالة إحصائية على شرعية المؤسسة وسمعتها. كما أكدت النتائج أن للمؤثرين والمشاهير دوراً تعديلياً إيجابياً ذا دلالة إحصائية، مما يعني أن فعالية الاتصال تتعزز عند دعمه بمشاركة هؤلاء الفاعلين.

الدلالات التطبيقية: وتؤكد هذه النتائج الأهمية العملية للتخطيط الاستراتيجي للاتصال والاستفادة من المؤثرين لبناء الشرعية والسمعة في البيئات الهشة سياسياً ومؤسسياً. ومن خلال استثمار السرد المؤثر، والرسائل المتسقة والموثوقة، والاستجابة الفعالة، يمكن للمؤسسات في سياقات مثل فلسطين تعزيز ثقة أصحاب المصلحة وبناء شرعية ورأس مال سمعة مستدام حتى في ظل حالات عدم الاستقرار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتصال الاستراتيجي، الشرعية، السمعة، المؤثرون، البيئات الهشة.