

A Public Relations Perspective of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Organization-Public Relationship Indicators of the CDC

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INTRODUCTION

Excellent public relations move an organization toward its overall mission and builds strong relationships between the organization and the public (Grunig, 1992). Individuals and communities will be more likely to follow the guidance and recommendations established by organizations with a shared two-way relationship. The purpose of this study was to explore the organizational-public relationship of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the COVID-19 pandemic to determine what relationship indicators have been best promoted through messaging (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

METHODS

A quantitative survey was conducted with 1,500 residents in the United States to address the purpose of this study. Data were collected between April 23 - May 7, 2020 using Qualtrics. The instrument used in this study was adapted from Hon and Grunig's (1999) OPR instrument. Descriptive data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The purpose of this study was part of a larger study that explored the perceptions of COVID-19.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from the study reveal strong public perceptions of commitment, trust, and satisfaction of the CDC. By applying this novel approach to the communication of science and health organizations, findings from this study can be applied to position strategic communication efforts to address areas of improvement, such as exchange relationships and control mutuality, through partnerships with grassroots organizations, such as local Extension, farmworker advocacy groups, and healthcare workers. Future research should explore how these OPR indicators might have been impacted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



TRUST

degree of confidence and openness the public has with the CDC ($M = 3.838$, $SD = .932$)



SATISFACTION

level of favorability the public has towards the CDC ($M = 3.784$, $SD = .998$)



COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIP

benefits exchanged by the CDC out of concern for the public's wellbeing, as perceived by the public ($M = 3.778$, $SD = 1.0$)



COMMITMENT

extent to which the public believes and feels that the relationship with the CDC is worth spending energy to maintain and promote ($M = 3.660$, $SD = 1.070$)



CONTROL MUTUALITY

level of agreement from the public on who has the influential power on one another ($M = 3.469$, $SD = .830$)



EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIP

the public's perception that the CDC providing benefits to the the public with the only reason in mind that the other group has previously contributed benefits or is anticipated to provide benefits in the future ($M = 2.571$, $SD = 1.187$)

**Mean scores are based on a 5-point scale.*