

The Role of Digital Public Relations in Enhancing Public Trust and Improving Quality of Life in Security Institutions at the UAE

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Digital Public Relations (DPR) in enhancing public trust and improving quality of life within UAE security institutions. While prior research has highlighted the importance of digital communication in governance, limited attention has been given to its mediating role and its influence on both trust and well-being outcomes, particularly in non-Western and security-sector contexts. Addressing this gap, the conceptual framework is developed and empirically tested to examine how Perceived Institutional

Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Perceived Transparency and Accountability influence Employees' Perceived Public Trust and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life through DPR. Data were collected from 428 employees and internal stakeholders within UAE security institutions using a stratified sampling approach. The model was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that all antecedent constructs significantly influence DPR, with Citizen Engagement and Participation emerging as the strongest predictor. DPR, in turn, exerts a substantial effect on public trust and a meaningful effect on quality of life, while public trust also positively influences quality of life. Mediation analysis confirms that DPR functions as a central mechanism through which institutional and participatory factors are translated into trust and well-being outcomes. The study contributes to theory by integrating communication, trust, and quality-of-life frameworks within the conceptual framework and by positioning DPR as a mediating construct rather than a direct predictor. It also provides empirical evidence from a UAE security context, extending the literature beyond Western settings. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strategic digital communication, participatory engagement, and transparency in strengthening trust and enhancing societal well-being. The study underscores DPR as a critical governance capability in digitally advanced public-sector environments.

Keywords: Digital Public Relations, Public Trust, Quality of Life, UAE Security Institutions, Conceptual Framework, PLS-SEM, Citizen Engagement, Transparency and Accountability

1. Introduction

Digital Public Relations (DPR) refers to the strategic use of digital platforms to communicate with stakeholders, manage institutional reputation, and build relationships. In public-sector contexts, DPR has evolved into a core governance function that enables timely, transparent, and interactive communication between institutions and citizens (Mergel, 2013; Kim et al., 2024). The increasing digitization of government has further amplified the role of digital communication in shaping public perceptions, facilitating engagement, and delivering public value (OECD, 2021; OECD, 2024b). In security and public safety settings, where accurate and timely information is critical, DPR supports the dissemination of reliable information, reduces uncertainty, and strengthens institutional credibility through continuous interaction with stakeholders (Yun et al., 2024; Musiatowicz-Podbial, 2024).

DPR is closely linked to key governance outcomes, particularly public trust and quality of life (QoL). Public trust reflects citizens' confidence in the competence, integrity, and responsiveness of institutions, and is strongly influenced by the quality of communication and transparency (OECD, 2024a; Tichaawa et al., 2023). At the same time, QoL has emerged as a central policy objective, encompassing subjective evaluations of safety, satisfaction, and social inclusion (Wellbeing Research Centre, 2025). Effective digital communication contributes to QoL by improving access to information, enhancing perceptions of safety, and strengthening institutional responsiveness (Ekici et al., 2022; Goodarzi & Nasiri Barmalvan, 2024). These relationships suggest that DPR extends beyond communication functions to influence broader societal outcomes.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) provides a distinctive context for examining these relationships. The country is characterized by high digital connectivity and advanced e-government systems, supported by national strategies that prioritize citizen-centric communication and digital transformation (OECD, 2024b; UAE Government, 2025). The UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025 emphasizes proactive communication, integrated digital services, and the use of advanced technologies to enhance public trust and well-being (UAE Government, 2025). In this environment, security institutions such as the Ministry of Interior and police organizations rely extensively on digital platforms for public awareness, service delivery, and crisis communication. DPR therefore functions not merely as a communication tool but as an institutional capability embedded within governance processes.

Despite growing scholarly attention, several gaps remain in the literature. First, most studies on digital communication and public trust are concentrated in Western contexts, with limited empirical evidence from Gulf countries and security-sector settings. Second, while prior research has examined the relationship between digital communication and trust, quality of life is rarely investigated as a distinct outcome. Third, existing studies predominantly rely on citizen samples, overlooking internal stakeholders who design, implement, and experience DPR practices within institutions. In addition, limited research has examined public trust and QoL simultaneously as dual outcomes of digital communication processes.

A further gap concerns the role of DPR as a mediating mechanism. While digital communication has been widely studied as a direct predictor of trust, few studies

conceptualize it as a process that translates institutional antecedents into stakeholder perceptions (Shin et al., 2024; Dobija et al., 2023). This is particularly relevant for variables such as Perceived Institutional Performance (PIP), Citizen Engagement and Participation (CEP), and Perceived Transparency and Accountability (PTA), which are likely to influence outcomes through communication processes rather than directly. Moreover, the relationship between public trust and QoL remains underexplored, despite evidence indicating that trust contributes to well-being and societal stability (Sjöberg et al., 2024; OECD, 2024c).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the role of Digital Public Relations in enhancing public trust and improving quality of life in UAE security institutions. Using data from internal stakeholders, it develops and empirically tests an integrated conceptual framework that positions DPR as a central mediating mechanism linking institutional performance, citizen engagement, and transparency to trust and QoL outcomes. By analysing both direct and indirect relationships, the study contributes to the literature by advancing understanding of DPR as a strategic governance mechanism and by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western, security-sector context aligned with UAE policy priorities.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical and Contextual Foundations

This study is informed by Excellence Theory, Institutional Trust Theory, and Social Capital Theory. Excellence Theory emphasizes the role of strategic communication in building relationships and trust. Institutional Trust Theory explains how perceptions of competence, transparency, and responsiveness shape trust in public institutions. Social Capital Theory highlights the importance of engagement and interaction in strengthening relational ties between institutions and stakeholders. Together, these perspectives provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how Digital Public Relations (DPR) translates institutional conditions into trust and quality-of-life outcomes.

In contemporary public administration, the increasing digitization of governance has transformed communication into a core institutional function, shaping how public organizations interact with stakeholders and deliver public value (OECD, 2021; OECD, 2024a). DPR has therefore emerged as a critical mechanism through which governments communicate performance, engage stakeholders, and reinforce institutional legitimacy. Empirical evidence shows that trust in public institutions is strongly influenced by perceptions of competence, transparency, and responsiveness (OECD, 2024a). Accordingly, digital government strategies emphasize citizen-centric communication and integrated digital services as key drivers of trust and institutional effectiveness (OECD, 2024b). In the UAE context, the Digital Government Strategy 2025 reinforces these priorities by promoting proactive communication and advanced digital service delivery to enhance public satisfaction and institutional credibility (UAE Government, 2025).

At the same time, quality of life has become a central policy objective in modern governance. Global evidence indicates that trust in institutions, access to reliable information, and effective communication significantly contribute to subjective well-being (Wellbeing

Research Centre, 2025). These developments suggest that digital communication is not merely a technical function but a strategic governance mechanism that links institutional performance, stakeholder engagement, and transparency to broader societal outcomes, including trust and quality of life.

2.2 Digital Public Relations in Public-Sector Governance

Digital Public Relations (DPR) refers to the strategic use of digital platforms to manage communication between public institutions and their stakeholders. In the public sector, DPR facilitates information dissemination, enhances transparency, and enables interactive engagement (Mergel, 2013; Kim et al., 2024). With the advancement of digital governance, DPR has become a central mechanism for strengthening citizen–government relationships. Empirical evidence indicates that digital communication improves transparency, responsiveness, and trust by enabling timely and accessible information exchange (Yun et al., 2024). In addition, digital platforms contribute to public value creation by supporting participatory and responsive governance processes (Musiatowicz-Podbial, 2024). These functions are particularly critical in security institutions, where credible and timely communication is essential for maintaining public confidence. Despite its growing importance, prior research has predominantly examined DPR as a direct determinant of outcomes such as trust and satisfaction. Limited attention has been given to its role as a mediating mechanism through which institutional characteristics influence stakeholder perceptions. This study addresses this gap by conceptualizing DPR as a central conduit that translates institutional performance, engagement, and transparency into trust and quality-of-life outcomes.

2.3 Antecedents of Digital Public Relations

2.3.1 Perceived Institutional Performance and Digital Public Relations

Perceived Institutional Performance (PIP) reflects stakeholders' evaluation of how effectively public institutions deliver services and fulfil their mandates. Strong performance enhances institutional credibility and provides substantive, verifiable outcomes that can be communicated to stakeholders (Dong & Kübler, 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that perceptions of competence and reliability are key drivers of trust and communication effectiveness (OECD, 2024a). Institutions that perform well generate credible information and consistent outcomes, which reduce uncertainty and strengthen the quality and coherence of digital communication. As a result, higher perceived performance is expected to enhance the effectiveness of DPR.

H1: Perceived Institutional Performance positively influences Digital Public Relations.

2.3.2 Citizen Engagement and Participation and Digital Public Relations

Citizen Engagement and Participation (CEP) refer to the extent to which individuals interact with public institutions through feedback, dialogue, and involvement in governance processes. Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for participation and co-creation, enabling more interactive and inclusive governance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2024). Research shows that

engagement strengthens communication quality by increasing interaction and feedback between institutions and stakeholders (Vu & Hartley, 2025). It also generates demand for responsiveness, encouraging institutions to adopt more dynamic and interactive communication practices (Naranjo-Zolotov et al., 2019). Consequently, higher levels of engagement are expected to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of DPR.

H2: Citizen Engagement and Participation positively influence Digital Public Relations.

2.3.3 Transparency and Accountability and Digital Public Relations

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of effective governance. Transparency involves the open and timely dissemination of information, while accountability requires institutions to justify their actions and decisions. Studies consistently show that transparency reduces information asymmetry and enhances institutional credibility (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013; Abbasov, 2025). Digital communication enables institutions to operationalize these principles by providing accessible, timely, and clear information to stakeholders (OECD, 2021). As transparency increases, communication becomes more consistent and credible, thereby strengthening DPR practices.

H3: Perceived Transparency and Accountability positively influence Digital Public Relations.

2.4 Digital Public Relations and Outcome Relationships

2.4.1 Digital Public Relations and Public Trust

Public trust is a key indicator of institutional legitimacy. DPR enhances trust by improving transparency, responsiveness, and communication consistency. Strategic communication has been shown to strengthen legitimacy and stakeholder relationships (Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2018). In digital environments, communication quality significantly influences trust in public institutions (Tichaawa et al., 2023).

H4: Digital Public Relations positively influence Public Trust.

2.4.2 Digital Public Relations and Quality of Life

Quality of Life (QoL) reflects individuals' well-being, including safety, satisfaction, and social inclusion. DPR contributes to QoL by improving access to information and reducing uncertainty. Research indicates that public services and communication significantly influence well-being (Ekici et al., 2022). Digital governance initiatives have also been linked to improved QoL outcomes (Goodarzi & Nasiri Barmalvan, 2024).

H5: Digital Public Relations positively influence Quality of Life.

2.4.3 Public Trust and Quality of Life

Public trust plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of safety and stability. Higher trust reduces uncertainty and enhances confidence in institutions. Empirical evidence shows that trust is strongly associated with improved quality of life and subjective well-being (Sjöberg et al., 2024). OECD indicators further emphasize trust as a key dimension of effective

governance (OECD, 2024c).

H12: Public Trust positively influences Quality of Life.

2.5 Mediating Role of Digital Public Relations

DPR is conceptualized as a mediating mechanism that translates institutional characteristics into trust and quality-of-life outcomes. Mediation analysis provides a framework for understanding how relationships occur (Zhao et al., 2010). Recent studies highlight the role of digital communication in mediating trust formation and governance outcomes (Shin et al., 2024; Dobija et al., 2023). These findings suggest that institutional performance, engagement, and transparency influence outcomes indirectly through communication processes.

Mediation Hypotheses

H6: DPR mediates the relationship between PIP and Public Trust.

H7: DPR mediates the relationship between PIP and Quality of Life.

H8: DPR mediates the relationship between CEP and Public Trust.

H9: DPR mediates the relationship between CEP and Quality of Life.

H10: DPR mediates the relationship between PTA and Public Trust.

H11: DPR mediates the relationship between PTA and Quality of Life.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed, this study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates institutional antecedents, digital communication processes, and governance outcomes. Specifically, Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Transparency and Accountability are expected to influence Digital Public Relations, which in turn affects Public Trust and Quality of Life. Public Trust is also proposed to have a direct effect on Quality of Life. In addition, Digital Public Relations is hypothesized to mediate the relationships between the antecedent variables and the outcome variables.

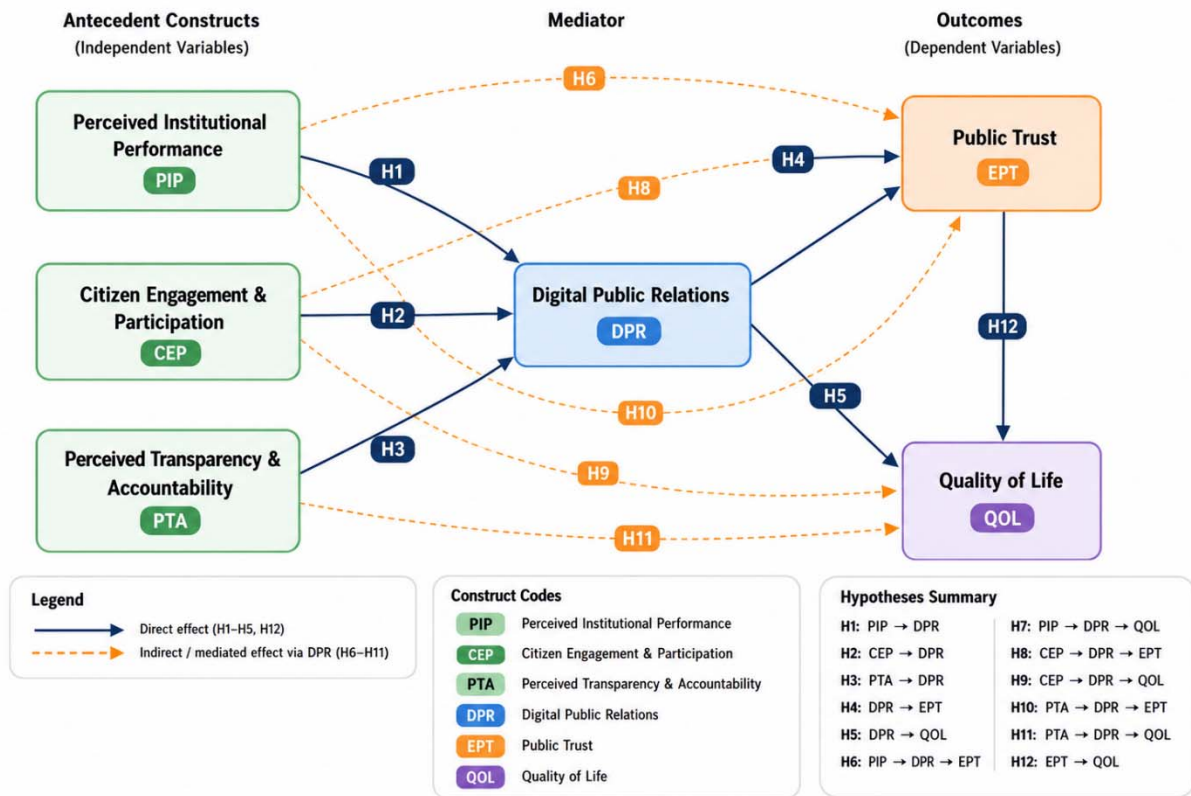


Figure 1. The conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study, depicting the hypothesized relationships among the constructs, including both direct and indirect paths. The framework reflects the central role of Digital Public Relations as a communication mechanism linking institutional conditions to trust and well-being outcomes in UAE security institutions.

3. Modelling of the framework

The conceptual framework presented in the previous section was modelled using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, implemented through SmartPLS software. This method is particularly well suited for analysing complex models involving multiple constructs and mediating relationships, as proposed in this study. As illustrated in Figure 2, Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Perceived Transparency and Accountability are specified as exogenous constructs influencing Digital Public Relations, which subsequently affects Employees’ Perceived Public Trust and, in turn, Employees’ Perceived Quality of Life.

In line with established PLS-SEM procedures, the analysis was conducted in two sequential stages. The first stage involved the assessment of the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs, while the second stage focused on evaluating the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships. This stepwise approach ensures that

the measurement properties are satisfactory before proceeding to structural analysis.

To operationalize the model, data were collected and screened prior to analysis. The respondents comprised employees and internal stakeholders working within UAE security institutions, including the Ministry of Interior, police forces, and other security leadership bodies. These individuals are directly involved in, or regularly exposed to, institutional digital public relations practices and are therefore well positioned to evaluate the study constructs.

Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 483 were returned, indicating a high response rate. After removing 42 incomplete responses and 13 outliers, a final sample of 428 valid responses was retained for analysis. As illustrated in Figure 2, the study model comprises six reflective constructs: Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, Perceived Transparency and Accountability, Digital Public Relations, Employees' Perceived Public Trust, and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life. These constructs were measured using a total of 21 indicators.

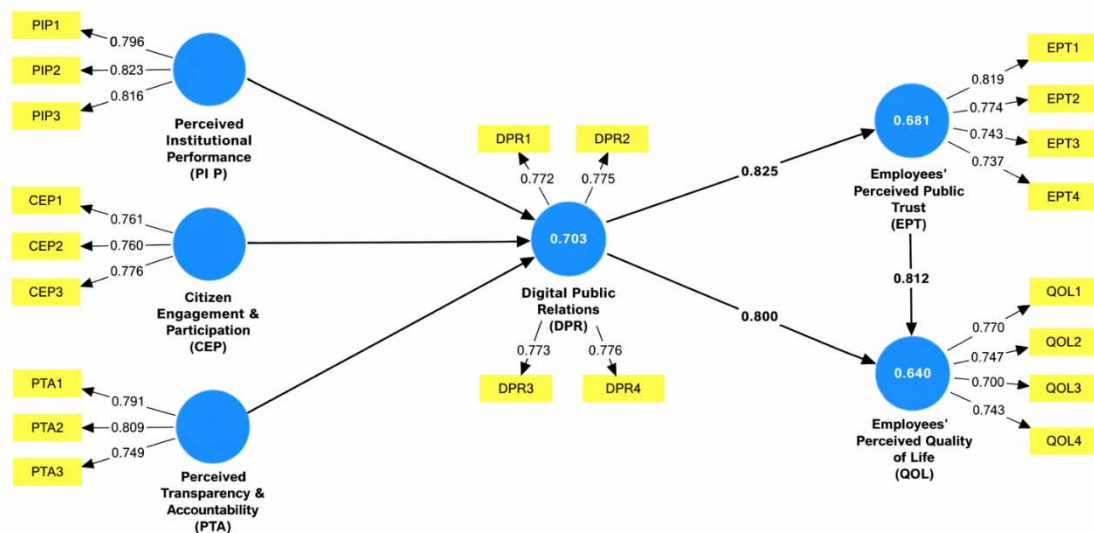


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Model Assessment

3.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated following established PLS-SEM guidelines. Specifically, indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed to ensure that the measurement items adequately represent their respective constructs before proceeding to the structural model analysis (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

3.1.1 Indicator Reliability

Indicator reliability examines the strength of association between items and their constructs.

Outer loadings of 0.708 or higher are preferred, though values close to 0.70 may be retained if overall reliability is acceptable (Hair et al., 2022). The results confirmed satisfactory indicator reliability, with outer loadings ranging between 0.700 and 0.823 (refer to Table 1). All items exceeded or closely approached the recommended threshold of 0.70, and none fell below 0.60. This indicates that each indicator was strongly associated with its latent construct, and all items were retained for further analysis.

3.1.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. While alpha values of 0.70 are generally acceptable, composite reliability is preferred in PLS-SEM as it accounts for unequal loadings and is less conservative (Hair et al., 2022). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.647 to 0.777, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.810 to 0.857 (refer to Table 1). All composite reliability values exceeded the 0.70 benchmark, confirming consistency. Although Cronbach's alpha for Citizen Engagement and Participation (0.647) and Perceived Transparency and Accountability (0.685) was slightly below the conventional threshold, these values were acceptable given their composite reliability and the tendency of Cronbach's alpha to underestimate reliability in PLS-SEM when constructs have few items.

3.1.3 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A threshold of 0.50 indicates that constructs explain at least half of the variance in their indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022). AVE values ranged from 0.548 to 0.659 across constructs (refer to Table 1), all exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.50. This confirms that each construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators.

Table 1. Indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity

Construct	Item	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Perceived Institutional Performance	PIP1	0.796	0.741	0.853	0.659
	PIP2	0.823			
	PIP3	0.816			
Citizen Engagement and Participation	CEP1	0.761	0.647	0.810	0.586
	CEP2	0.760			
	CEP3	0.776			
Perceived Transparency and Accountability	PTA1	0.791	0.685	0.826	0.614
	PTA2	0.809			
	PTA3	0.749			
Digital Public Relations	DPR1	0.772	0.777	0.857	0.599
	DPR2	0.775			
	DPR3	0.773			
	DPR4	0.776			
Employees' Perceived Public Trust	EPT1	0.819	0.769	0.853	0.592
	EPT2	0.774			
	EPT3	0.743			
	EPT4	0.737			
Employees' Perceived Quality of Life	QOL1	0.770	0.724	0.829	0.548
	QOL2	0.747			
	QOL3	0.700			
	QOL4	0.743			

3.1.4 Fornell and Larcker Criterion

Discriminant validity examines whether a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the model. In this study, discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Using more than one criterion is recommended because no single test is sufficient on its own in all cases (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is established when the square root of each construct's AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs. Table 2 presents the Fornell and Larcker matrix, where the diagonal values represent the square root of the AVE for each construct.

The results show that the diagonal values were 0.812 for Perceived Institutional Performance, 0.765 for Citizen Engagement and Participation, 0.784 for Perceived Transparency and Accountability, 0.774 for Digital Public Relations, 0.769 for Employees' Perceived Public Trust, and 0.740 for Employees' Perceived Quality of Life. In every case, the diagonal value was higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations. This indicates that each

construct shared more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. Therefore, discriminant validity was supported according to the Fornell and Larcker criterion.

Table 2. Fornell and Larcker criterion

Construct	PIP	CEP	PTA	DPR	EPT	QOL
Perceived Institutional Performance PIP	0.812					
Citizen Engagement and Participation CEP	-0.014	0.765				
Perceived Transparency and Accountability PTA	-0.067	0.033	0.784			
Digital Public Relations DPR	0.229	0.396	0.267	0.774		
Employees' Perceived Public Trust EPT	0.137	0.174	0.309	0.514	0.769	
Employees' Perceived Quality of Life QOL	0.244	0.127	0.204	0.460	0.490	0.740

3.1.5 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

The HTMT ratio is considered a more sensitive criterion for detecting discriminant validity problems in variance-based SEM. Values below 0.85 are often considered conservative evidence of discriminant validity, while values below 0.90 are generally acceptable depending on the research context (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3 presents the HTMT values for all construct pairs. The values ranged from 0.054 to 0.664. The highest HTMT value was observed between Digital Public Relations and Employees' Perceived Public Trust at 0.664, followed by Employees' Perceived Public Trust and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life at 0.654. Both values remained well below the threshold of 0.85. All other HTMT values were also below the recommended cut-off level. These results further confirm that the constructs were empirically distinct from one another. Thus, discriminant validity was established according to the HTMT criterion as well.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio

Construct	PIP	CEP	PTA	DPR	EPT	QOL
Perceived Institutional Performance						
Citizen Engagement and Participation	0.054					
Perceived Transparency and Accountability	0.110	0.083				
Digital Public Relations	0.303	0.559	0.365			
Employees' Perceived Public Trust	0.183	0.245	0.428	0.664		
Employees' Perceived Quality of Life	0.328	0.219	0.290	0.615	0.654	

3.1.6 Summary of Measurement Model Assessment

Overall, the results indicate that the measurement model was acceptable. All item loadings

were satisfactory and supported indicator reliability. Composite reliability values exceeded the recommended threshold for all constructs, indicating adequate internal consistency reliability. Although Cronbach's alpha values for Citizen Engagement and Participation and Perceived Transparency and Accountability were slightly below 0.70, they remained close to the acceptable range and were supported by stronger composite reliability and AVE results. Convergent validity was also achieved because all AVE values exceeded 0.50. Discriminant validity was established through both the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio. In the Fornell and Larcker matrix, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs. In addition, all HTMT values were below 0.85. Taken together, these findings indicate that the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity and was therefore suitable for proceeding to the structural model assessment.

3.2 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated following established PLS-SEM procedures, including the assessment of the coefficient of determination, effect size, predictive relevance, path coefficients, and mediation effects (Hair et al., 2022). The model specifies Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Perceived Transparency and Accountability as predictors of Digital Public Relations. In turn, Digital Public Relations predicts Employees' Perceived Public Trust and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life, while Public Trust also influences Quality of Life. This configuration is consistent with the proposed conceptual framework and the twelve hypotheses of the study.

3.2.1 Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the proportion of variance in each endogenous construct explained by its predictors. In PLS-SEM, R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are generally interpreted as weak, moderate, and substantial, respectively, depending on the research context (Hair et al., 2022). The results indicate that Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Perceived Transparency and Accountability collectively explain 28.5% of the variance in Digital Public Relations. Digital Public Relations accounts for 26.5% of the variance in Public Trust, while Digital Public Relations together with Public Trust explain 29.8% of the variance in Quality of Life (see Table 4).

Table 4. Coefficient of determination

Endogenous Construct	R²	Interpretation
Digital Public Relations	0.285	Modest
Employees' Perceived Public Trust	0.265	Modest
Employees' Perceived Quality of Life	0.298	Modest

3.2.2 Effect Size

Effect size (f^2) was assessed to determine the contribution of each predictor construct to the variance explained in the endogenous constructs. In PLS-SEM, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are commonly interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). For Digital Public Relations, Citizen Engagement and Participation exhibited a medium effect (0.214), whereas Perceived Institutional Performance (0.086) and Perceived Transparency and Accountability (0.105) showed small effects. These findings indicate that Citizen Engagement and Participation is the most influential predictor of Digital Public Relations.

Regarding Employees' Perceived Quality of Life, Digital Public Relations demonstrated a small effect (0.087), while Employees' Perceived Public Trust showed a slightly stronger small effect (0.120). This pattern suggests that the influence of Digital Public Relations on Quality of Life is partly transmitted through Public Trust. Effect sizes are reported only for constructs that serve as predictors. As the final endogenous construct, Employees' Perceived Quality of Life does not function as a predictor and is therefore not included in Table 5.

Table 5. Effect size (f^2)

Construct	f^2	Interpretation
Perceived Institutional Performance	0.086	Small
Citizen Engagement and Participation	0.214	Medium
Perceived Transparency and Accountability	0.105	Small
Digital Public Relations	0.087	Small
Employees' Perceived Public Trust	0.120	Small

3.2.3 Predictive Relevance

Predictive relevance was assessed using a cross-validated Q^2 procedure. In PLS-SEM, Q^2 values greater than zero indicate that the model has predictive relevance for a given endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2022; Shmueli et al., 2019). The results show positive Q^2 values for all endogenous constructs, indicating adequate predictive relevance. Specifically, the Q^2 values were 0.271 for Digital Public Relations, 0.258 for Employees' Perceived Public Trust, and 0.288 for Employees' Perceived Quality of Life. These findings suggest that the model is capable of generating meaningful predictions for the key outcome constructs.

Table 6. Predictive relevance

Endogenous Construct	Q^2	Interpretation
Digital Public Relations	0.271	Predictive relevance established
Employees' Perceived Public Trust	0.258	Predictive relevance established
Employees' Perceived Quality of Life	0.288	Predictive relevance established

3.2.4 Direct Path Coefficients

The direct relationships among the constructs were examined using bootstrapping procedures. In PLS-SEM, path coefficients represent the strength and direction of relationships, while their significance is evaluated using standard errors, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals. All six direct hypotheses were supported. Perceived Institutional Performance had a positive and significant effect on Digital Public Relations ($\beta = 0.249$, $t = 6.178$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Citizen Engagement and Participation also showed a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.392$, $t = 9.850$, $p < 0.001$), representing the strongest predictor of Digital Public Relations and supporting H2. Similarly, Perceived Transparency and Accountability exerted a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.275$, $t = 6.988$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3.

Digital Public Relations had a strong positive effect on Employees' Perceived Public Trust ($\beta = 0.515$, $t = 14.639$, $p < 0.001$), which was the strongest path in the model, supporting H4. It also had a significant effect on Employees' Perceived Quality of Life ($\beta = 0.288$, $t = 6.696$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. In addition, Employees' Perceived Public Trust positively influenced Quality of Life ($\beta = 0.338$, $t = 7.901$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H12.

Table 7. Direct effects and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PIP → DPR	0.249	6.178	<0.001	Supported
H2	CEP → DPR	0.392	9.850	<0.001	Supported
H3	PTA → DPR	0.275	6.988	<0.001	Supported
H4	DPR → EPT	0.515	14.639	<0.001	Supported
H5	DPR → QOL	0.288	6.696	<0.001	Supported
H12	EPT → QOL	0.338	7.901	<0.001	Supported

Overall, the direct effects strongly support the structural relationships proposed in the model. Digital Public Relations emerges as a central construct, exerting substantial influence on Public Trust and a meaningful effect on Quality of Life.

3.2.5 Indirect Effects and Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the indirect effects within the model. In PLS-SEM, the significance of indirect effects provides the primary basis for assessing mediation (Hair et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2010). All six indirect effects were positive and statistically significant. Perceived Institutional Performance influenced Employees' Perceived Public Trust ($\beta = 0.128$, $t = 5.321$, $p < 0.001$) and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life ($\beta = 0.072$, $t = 4.280$, $p < 0.001$) through Digital Public Relations, supporting H6 and H7. Citizen Engagement and Participation showed the strongest indirect effects, influencing Public Trust ($\beta = 0.202$, $t = 8.241$, $p < 0.001$) and Quality of Life ($\beta = 0.113$, $t = 5.609$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H8 and H9. Similarly, Perceived Transparency and Accountability had significant indirect effects on Public Trust ($\beta = 0.141$, $t = 6.044$, $p < 0.001$) and Quality of Life ($\beta =$

0.079, $t = 4.581$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H10 and H11.

Table 8. Indirect effects and mediation results

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H6	PIP → DPR → EPT	0.128	5.321	<0.001	Supported
H7	PIP → DPR → QOL	0.072	4.280	<0.001	Supported
H8	CEP → DPR → EPT	0.202	8.241	<0.001	Supported
H9	CEP → DPR → QOL	0.113	5.609	<0.001	Supported
H10	PTA → DPR → EPT	0.141	6.044	<0.001	Supported
H11	PTA → DPR → QOL	0.079	4.581	<0.001	Supported

These findings indicate that Digital Public Relations serves as a key mediating mechanism linking institutional factors to trust and quality of life outcomes.

3.2.6 Summary of Structural Model Results

The structural model produced consistent and statistically significant results. All direct hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H12) and all mediation hypotheses (H6 to H11) were supported. The strongest direct effect was observed between Digital Public Relations and Employees' Perceived Public Trust, followed by the effect of Citizen Engagement and Participation on Digital Public Relations.

The model demonstrated acceptable explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.285 for Digital Public Relations, 0.265 for Employees' Perceived Public Trust, and 0.298 for Employees' Perceived Quality of Life. Effect size results indicated that Citizen Engagement and Participation was the most influential predictor of Digital Public Relations, while the effects on Quality of Life were smaller but meaningful. In addition, the Q^2 results confirmed adequate predictive relevance across all endogenous constructs.

Overall, the findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed model. Digital Public Relations plays a central role by linking institutional conditions and stakeholder engagement to trust and quality of life outcomes. The next section integrates the measurement and structural results, followed by a discussion of their theoretical and practical implications.

4. Discussion of Results

This study examined the role of Digital Public Relations (DPR) in enhancing Employees' Perceived Public Trust (EPT) and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life (QOL) within UAE security institutions. The findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed model and reinforce the strategic importance of DPR as a governance mechanism in digitally advanced contexts such as the UAE.

4.1 Direct Effects in the Context of UAE Security Institutions

The results indicate that Perceived Institutional Performance (PIP), Citizen Engagement and

Participation (CEP), and Perceived Transparency and Accountability (PTA) significantly influence DPR. Among these, CEP emerged as the strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of participatory communication in shaping perceptions of institutional responsiveness. This finding aligns with prior research demonstrating that digital engagement enhances interaction, feedback, and responsiveness in public-sector communication (Mergel, 2013; Naranjo-Zolotov et al., 2019; Vu & Hartley, 2025). In the UAE context, where digital governance strategies emphasize citizen-centric services and engagement, this result reflects the institutional prioritization of interactive communication (OECD, 2024b; UAE Government, 2025).

The positive effects of PIP and PTA further highlight that institutional competence and transparency provide the foundation for effective communication. Evidence from the OECD Trust Survey shows that perceptions of reliability, openness, and responsiveness are key drivers of trust in public institutions (OECD, 2024a). In digital environments, these qualities must be communicated through accessible and consistent channels to influence stakeholder perceptions. This is particularly relevant in security institutions, where communication often relates to safety and risk management, and where the credibility of information is critical for maintaining public confidence.

DPR was found to exert the strongest effect on Public Trust, reinforcing the role of communication in shaping institutional legitimacy. Prior studies demonstrate that digital communication enhances trust by improving transparency, responsiveness, and stakeholder engagement (Tichaawa et al., 2023; Yun et al., 2024). In line with OECD (2021) findings, effective public communication strengthens institutional credibility by ensuring that information is timely, clear, and accessible. In the UAE security context, DPR therefore functions as a key mechanism for reinforcing trust and supporting compliance and cooperation.

In addition, DPR had a significant positive effect on Quality of Life, extending its influence beyond communication outcomes to broader well-being perceptions. This finding is consistent with evidence showing that access to reliable information, effective service delivery, and responsive governance contribute to subjective well-being (Ekici et al., 2022; Goodarzi & Nasiri Barmalvan, 2024). The significant relationship between Public Trust and Quality of Life further supports the view that trust enhances perceptions of safety, stability, and satisfaction (Sjöberg et al., 2024; OECD, 2024c). Taken together, these results indicate that DPR contributes to QoL both directly and indirectly through trust.

4.2 Mediation Effects and the Role of DPR

The mediation analysis confirms that DPR operates as a central mechanism through which institutional and participatory factors influence both trust and quality of life. All indirect effects were significant, indicating that the impact of PIP, CEP, and PTA is largely transmitted through digital communication processes.

This finding addresses a key gap in the literature, where digital communication has often been examined as a direct predictor rather than as a mediating construct (Shin et al., 2024;

Dobija et al., 2023). The results suggest that institutional performance, transparency, and engagement do not automatically translate into trust or well-being outcomes. Instead, these factors must be effectively communicated through DPR to shape stakeholder perceptions. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that communication processes play a critical role in translating governance practices into trust outcomes (OECD, 2021; Yun et al., 2024).

The relatively stronger indirect effects associated with CEP further indicate that engagement alone is insufficient unless supported by responsive and well-managed communication. Digital participation must therefore be accompanied by visible responsiveness, feedback integration, and continuous interaction to produce meaningful outcomes. In the UAE context, where digital platforms are widely used for public interaction, this finding underscores the importance of aligning participation mechanisms with effective communication strategies (OECD, 2024b; UAE Government, 2025).

4.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it integrates perspectives from digital governance, public communication, and trust research into a unified model, demonstrating how communication processes link institutional conditions to trust and well-being outcomes. By doing so, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of how digital communication functions within contemporary governance systems.

Second, the study extends DPR research by empirically validating its mediating role. While prior studies have emphasized the direct effects of communication on trust, this study demonstrates that DPR operates as a transmission mechanism that translates institutional performance, engagement, and transparency into stakeholder perceptions. This contributes to the growing body of literature on digital communication as a process-based rather than outcome-based construct (Shin et al., 2024; Dobija et al., 2023).

Third, the study contributes to the limited literature on digital governance in non-Western contexts. By focusing on UAE security institutions, it provides empirical evidence from a digitally advanced governance environment where communication plays a central role in policy implementation and public interaction (OECD, 2024b; UAE Government, 2025). Finally, it positions Quality of Life as a communication-sensitive outcome, highlighting the broader societal implications of digital public relations.

4.4 Practical Implications for UAE Security Institutions

The findings offer several practical implications. First, the strong influence of CEP suggests that security institutions should prioritize participatory digital platforms that enable interaction, feedback, and collaboration. Enhancing citizen engagement can improve communication quality and strengthen institutional relationships.

Second, the central role of DPR indicates that digital communication should be treated as a strategic governance capability rather than a technical function. This includes ensuring timely information dissemination, clarity of messaging, and responsiveness to public concerns, consistent with OECD (2021) recommendations on effective public communication.

Third, transparency and accountability practices should be reinforced through clear, accessible, and timely communication. Providing explanations for decisions and maintaining openness can enhance institutional credibility and trust (OECD, 2024a).

Finally, given the link between trust and quality of life, communication strategies should be aligned with broader policy objectives related to public safety and well-being. In the UAE context, this aligns with national priorities emphasizing digital transformation, trust, and quality of life as key governance outcomes (UAE Government, 2025; Wellbeing Research Centre, 2025).

4.5 Summary of Discussion

Overall, the findings confirm that Digital Public Relations plays a central role in enhancing public trust and improving quality of life in UAE security institutions. By acting as a strategic conduit between institutional performance, citizen engagement, and transparency, DPR contributes directly to governance outcomes that align with national priorities related to trust, safety, and well-being.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the role of Digital Public Relations (DPR) in enhancing Employees' Perceived Public Trust (EPT) and Employees' Perceived Quality of Life (QOL) within UAE security institutions. Drawing on PLS-SEM analysis, the findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed model and highlight DPR as a central mechanism linking institutional performance, citizen engagement, and transparency to key governance outcomes.

The results demonstrate that Perceived Institutional Performance, Citizen Engagement and Participation, and Perceived Transparency and Accountability significantly influence DPR, with engagement emerging as the strongest predictor. In turn, DPR exerts a substantial effect on Public Trust and a meaningful effect on Quality of Life, while Public Trust further contributes to improved quality of life perceptions. Importantly, the mediation analysis confirms that DPR functions as a strategic conduit through which institutional and participatory factors are translated into trust and well-being outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the study advances the literature by integrating Excellence Theory, Institutional Trust Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Quality of Life frameworks into a unified model. It extends prior research by empirically validating the mediating role of DPR and by positioning Quality of Life as a communication-sensitive outcome. Furthermore, the study contributes to the limited body of research on Digital Public Relations in non-Western and security-sector contexts, particularly within the UAE.

Practically, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening digital communication strategies within security institutions. Enhancing participatory platforms, ensuring transparency, and improving responsiveness can reinforce public trust and contribute to broader societal well-being. In a highly digitalized environment such as the UAE, DPR should be viewed not merely as a communication tool, but as a strategic governance capability aligned with national priorities related to safety, trust, and quality of life.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Second, the reliance on internal stakeholders may not fully capture the perspectives of the general public. Third, the study focuses on UAE security institutions, which may limit generalizability to other contexts or sectors.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, incorporating multi-stakeholder perspectives, and extending the model to other institutional settings or countries. Further studies may also explore additional variables, such as digital trust, misinformation management, or cultural factors, to deepen understanding of DPR's role in governance outcomes.

In conclusion, this study provides robust evidence that Digital Public Relations plays a pivotal role in enhancing public trust and improving quality of life in UAE security institutions. By bridging institutional performance, citizen engagement, and transparency with stakeholder perceptions, DPR emerges as a critical driver of effective, trust-based, and well-being-oriented governance.

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