



Media and Communication Cells in Algerian Universities "A Critical Look and Future Visions"

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Abstract:

Media and communication cells in the Algerian university are considered a vital element and a key player in building relationships and enhancing communication inside and outside the university institution. They work to provide effective channels of communication with students, professors and employees on the one hand, and with the external environment of the university on the other, which contributes to enhancing transparency and building the confidence of the community as a whole in the university, and plays a major role in building a positive image of the university and highlighting its activities at various levels.

Through this intervention, we seek to shed light on the reality of communication and media cells in Algerian universities and the challenges they face, whether in the field of providing information quickly and transparently, or in the field of training human cadres working in them, as well as their efficiency in managing crises, dealing with the media and improving the image of the institution.

Keywords: Communication Cells, Algerian University, Critical Look, Future Visions



INTRODUCTION

Media and communication cells in Algerian universities are among the most prominent pillars that contribute to building bridges between the university and its internal and external environment, as they work to promote interaction between the various components of the university community, including professors, students and employees, as well as between the university and its external environment.

However, despite this pivotal role, communication cells face a number of structural and organizational challenges that restrict their ability to perform effectively and sustainably. Perhaps one of the most prominent challenges facing media and communication cells in Algerian universities is the lack of technological infrastructure and poor investment in modern communication systems, which limits their ability to keep pace with rapid developments in the field of digital technology and social media, in an era when access to information and rapid interaction with events has become an urgent necessity.

These cells also face difficulty in providing interactive and transparent media services that meet the needs of the various components of the university community. The shortage of qualified human resources is another challenge, as there is a significant shortage of specialists capable of using modern technologies and effectively analyzing media data, which negatively affects the quality of the media content provided.

There are also challenges related to crisis management and dealing with various media outlets. Crises require a high capacity for immediate and effective communication to avoid exacerbating them and to maintain the university's positive image. However, the current media cells are often unprepared for such tasks due to lack of training and specialized expertise. This situation makes Algerian universities vulnerable to major challenges when facing public opinion or internal crises, which may affect their academic and societal reputation.

Moreover, media and communication cells in Algerian universities face difficulty in meeting the growing expectations of the university audience and the external community regarding transparency and credibility in the transmission of information, in light of the increasing pressure from the media and the public to obtain accurate and fast information. These cells are required to reconsider their media strategies to ensure the provision of transparent and professional content, which requires a comprehensive development of media work mechanisms within universities, including improving the quality of the content provided and modernizing the methods of communication used.

From all of the above, the scientific issue addressed by this research paper emerges, which is related to identifying how media and communication cells in Algerian universities can overcome the organizational, technological and human challenges that hinder their performance, to be able to



provide effective and transparent media and communication services that enhance the university's image and support the achievement of its academic and social goals, and what future strategies can be adopted to modernize these cells, in line with technological developments and the requirements of the digital age to enhance their role in crisis management and interact with the media and the university public more effectively?

I. Objectives of the study:

This study aims to achieve a set of objectives that can be summarized as follows:

- Conduct a comprehensive and realistic analysis of the status of media and communication cells in Algerian universities, in terms of their structure, functions and the challenges they face in an increasingly transformed academic environment at all levels.
- Identify and know the administrative, organizational, technological and human challenges that hinder the performance of media and communication cells in Algerian universities.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of media and communication cells in Algerian universities in managing media crises and dealing with different media outlets, especially in light of the rapid changes in the field of digital communication.
- Providing practical recommendations to develop and improve the performance of media and communication cells, with a focus on improving technological infrastructure, training human resources, and developing effective communication and crisis management strategies.
- Providing a future vision on the expected role of media and communication cells in Algerian universities, and how they can adapt to technological and social transformations to enhance their role as a vital intermediary between the university and its surroundings.

II. The relevance of the study:

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it helps in understanding the challenges facing media and communication cells in Algerian universities, which may contribute to identifying current weaknesses and providing practical recommendations to improve communication mechanisms within the university in a way that leads to enhancing organizational effectiveness and strengthening cooperation between different university groups.

It also contributes to highlighting the urgent need to develop the skills of workers in media and communication cells, which may reflect positively on the quality of media services provided and enhance the university's ability to interact with crises and manage public relations, in addition to seeking to analyze the role of media and communication cells in improving the image of the university and its management of crises and in providing strategies to develop effective communication that enhances the reputation of Algerian universities locally and internationally, and then providing a future vision on how to develop media and communication cells in Algerian universities in line with global changes in the field of communication and technology

III. Concepts of the study:

1. Algerian University:



The Algerian University is a public educational institution with legal personality and financial autonomy, according to Decree No. 03-579 of August 23, 2004, which stipulates the model statute of the university. The university in Algeria is a public institution of an administrative nature, and plays a dual role as a national and academic institution, through which it seeks independence in order to achieve the objectives of knowledge production and dissemination. **(Saoudi, 2019)**

Through this definition, it can be said that the Algerian university has a dual role as part of the Algerian educational system and at the same time as an independent entity that seeks to achieve knowledge, academic and scientific goals.

2. Media and Communication Cells:

a. Definition:

The Media and Communication Cell is defined as:

"A subsidiary body of the University Directorate, which works to ensure an effective communication process between all university actors and different partners." **(University Of Blida, 2025)**

"It is an office that acts as a liaison within the organization and between the organization and the different entities it may deal with." **(Kadri, 2010)**

"It is a cell in a specific organization that is concerned with following up on all media and communication about the organization and its surroundings, as well as initiating the dissemination of news and information about the organization by sending it to various media outlets. The aim of establishing the cell is to create an official and organized space for information and direct communication with the internal and external environment." **(Baghdad Baye & Ben Chergui, 2020)**

b. Objectives of the Media and Communications Cell:

This cell aims to achieve good and effective communication that promotes cooperation and coordination between these parties, and has divided its tasks into internal and external tasks.

c. Tasks of the Information and Communication Cell:

The tasks of the Media and Communication Cell at the university are divided into two parts:

✓ Internal tasks:

- Developing the organization's overall communication strategy by developing a comprehensive communication strategy that serves the university's objectives.
- Assisting university bodies in communicating and supporting departments and colleges in communicating their information and messages to the target audience, as well as developing a crisis communication plan, planning to deal with potential crises and ensuring the proper flow of information.



- Ensure wide dissemination of data and information and publish data and information issued by the University Directorate and faculties to ensure that it reaches students, professors and employees in a timely manner.

- Ensure effective internal communication through the university's website and social media pages and work on updating the website and keeping it up-to-date to ensure the flow of information

✓ **External tasks:**

- Media coverage of the university's activities and communication with the media to convey university news.

- Working to build relationships with the media to facilitate the dissemination of university news.

- Contacting economic and social partners to build and strengthen relationships with external partners, as well as organizing periodic meetings with the media and publishing periodicals (publishing and distributing periodicals containing news and information about the university). **(University Of Blida, 2025)**

In light of the rapid digital development and the increasing reliance on various digital media, the Information and Communication Cell performs the following tasks in the field of electronic publishing and activation:

- Disseminating various information about the university through its website.
- Regularly updating the contents of the website.
- Utilizing social media sites to disseminate various information, while ensuring communication with various groups in order to improve the university's external image.
- Work to disseminate information through various digital media such as email correspondence. **(University Of Tiaret, 2025)**

IV. Research population and study sample:

1. Search community:

The research community consists of all media and communication cells at the level of Algerian universities.

2. Study sample:

In view of the difficulty of applying the comprehensive inventory method, we chose to rely on the sampling method, where we selected a purposive sample that includes those in charge of information and communication cells in 10 universities in eastern Algeria, namely: Larbi Benmehidi University - Oum El Bouaghi, Abbas Leghrour University - Khenchela, 08 May 1945 University - Guelma, National Higher School of Biotechnology - Constantine, 20 August University - Skikda, Baji Mokhtar University - Annaba, Saleh Boubnidar University



- Constantine 3, El Hadj Lakhdar University - Batna 1, Mohamed Boudiaf University - Messila, and Abdelhamid Mehri University - Constantine 2.

V. Study type and approach:

1. Type of study:

This study belongs to analytical descriptive studies that "aim to study the current facts related to the nature of a phenomenon, a situation, a group of people, a set of events, or a set of conditions in order to obtain sufficient and accurate information about them without entering into their causes or control." (Hussein, 1976)

2. Approach to the study:

The formal or structural design of descriptive research is related to the type of methodology that the researcher follows in the study, and in this study we will use the survey method, which is one of the most prominent methods used in media research.

Due to the impossibility of applying a comprehensive survey to all members of the research community due to their large number and their dispersion across many regions, we relied on the sample survey method.

VI. Data collection tool:

In this study, we relied on a questionnaire, which is defined as: "a set of questions arranged on a specific topic that are placed in a form that is sent to the concerned persons by mail or delivered to them by hand in preparation for obtaining the answers to the questions contained therein, and by means of which new facts about the topic can be obtained or confirmation of information that is recognized but not supported by facts." (Bouhouche & Dhanibat, 2007)

In this context, the researchers designed a questionnaire divided into 09 topics that were distributed to the sample members electronically, and after retrieving them, we obtained the results that will be presented in the next section.

VII. Results of the field study:

After the exploratory study and data analysis, we came up with a set of findings that can be summarized as follows:

- Most of those in charge of running information and communication cells have high scientific and academic qualifications, most of them holding a doctorate degree ;
- The percentage of those in charge of running media and communication cells with degrees in media and communication disciplines does not exceed 50%, while the remaining category belongs to other disciplines such as sociology, physics, Arabic literature, English and management sciences...
- A significant percentage of the members of the media and communication cells of Algerian universities have benefited from training and training programs in areas related to the tasks



assigned to them, such as newspaper editing, presentation, press coverage, conducting interviews, preparing television programs, managing media campaigns and planning in public relations: Editing, presenting, reporting, interviewing, preparing television programs, managing media campaigns and planning public relations. However, there is a percentage of members who have not received any training, which is an indication of a gap in capacity development, which may negatively affect the effectiveness of these cells in performing their tasks;

- In some Algerian universities, the individual and collective performance of members of the media and communication cells is subject to periodic evaluation according to an evaluation grid and specific criteria, while in other universities this evaluation is absent, despite its importance in identifying strengths and weaknesses and correcting shortcomings in individual and collective performance;
- All media and communication cells in Algerian universities are considered an organ of the university directorate, which confirms that they are not independent and work under the direct supervision of the university administration;
- Most media and communication cells of Algerian universities include more than one member with creative specializations such as: Content creation, photography, editing, montage, editing, and technical specializations such as automated media and website management, which reflects the general trend based on content production and the management of technical tools to improve the image of the university in its social and economic environment;
- Tasks are divided among the members of the information and communication cells of Algerian universities according to customary practice or according to the internal regulations of the university and sometimes according to the specialization of each member. This is due to the absence of a specific legal framework to guide and regulate the division of labour, which may lead to disparities in performance and increase the likelihood of internal conflicts.
- All those in charge of media and communication cells at the level of Algerian universities believe that the number of team members is insufficient compared to the volume of work and tasks assigned to these cells, which may cause great pressure on the current members, which could negatively affect the quality of work and efficiency of performance, and most of them believe that the team needs support both in terms of quantity by increasing the number of members and in terms of quality by increasing and developing skills.
- Algerian universities - through the media and communication cells - rely on a number of strategies to ensure effective communication with the external public. The most prominent of these strategies is the reliance on marketing and promotion of university activities through all available communication channels (traditional and modern) in order to attract the external public and attract their attention. The findings also highlighted that strong relationships are



being established with the media to ensure comprehensive and effective media coverage of these activities.

- The information and communication cells of Algerian universities are increasingly relying on modern technological means such as e-mail, social networking sites, applications and digital platforms developed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as part of the ongoing efforts to digitize the higher education and scientific research sector.
- Those in charge of information and communication cells at Algerian universities believe that the means at their disposal are more or less sufficient for the performance of their tasks. However, they emphasize the need to strengthen and diversify them to ensure the achievement of the desired objectives, in addition to the urgent need to train and equip team members to use them in an optimal manner.
- The media and communication cells of Algerian universities are keen to ensure the quality of the content they provide, and this is done by producing reliable content by relying on official and accurate sources in collecting information to enhance the credibility of the university with the public, with the need to provide diverse and distinctive content in line with ethical values,
- Most media and communication cells of Algerian universities do not have a clear and ready media strategy to deal with crises. They do not act until after the emergence of the crisis by using traditional and modern media to issue press releases and provide accurate information on the subject.
- The information and communication cells of Algerian universities are responsible for presenting a good image of the university by promoting all the activities it hosts and organizing regular meetings with media representatives to provide them with all relevant updates and avoid the spread of false news and rumours. Members of the cell regularly and continuously monitor reactions and comments on social media platforms to assess the effectiveness of the communication efforts made and their contribution to achieving the set objectives.

VIII. Discussion of the Results:

The comprehensive study on media and communication cells in Algerian universities offers nuanced insights into their current status, challenges, and future prospects. By integrating the study's detailed findings with broader academic and institutional contexts, we can better appreciate the complexity of the issues at hand and identify actionable paths forward.

1. Human Resources and Specialization:

The gender imbalance—where 80% of cell managers are male—reflects not only the demanding nature of these roles but also broader societal and institutional patterns in Algerian academia¹. While most managers hold advanced degrees, less than half possess qualifications specifically in media and communication. This multidisciplinary background



can foster diverse perspectives, yet it also exposes a gap in specialized expertise crucial for effective media management, especially in crisis situations and digital communication. The lack of targeted specialization echoes findings in related research, which highlight the need for more focused training and academic preparation in digital public relations and media studies (Elbachari, 2024)

2. Training and Professional Development:

Although many staff members have received training in areas such as press editing, reporting, and public relations, a significant portion remains without formal professional development¹. This unevenness in training undermines the cells' ability to adapt to rapid technological changes and to manage complex communication scenarios, particularly during crises. The literature on digital public relations in Algerian universities further underscores the importance of continuous, specialized training to bridge methodological and technological gaps.

3. Organizational Structure and Autonomy:

The study reveals that communication cells operate under the direct authority of university administrations, lacking both structural independence and a clear legal framework¹. This subordination restricts their ability to innovate and respond flexibly to emerging challenges. The absence of formalized roles and responsibilities can also lead to internal conflicts and inconsistent performance. National forums and expert panels have repeatedly called for clearer governance structures and greater autonomy for these cells to enhance their effectiveness.

4. Resource Constraints:

A unanimous concern among respondents is the inadequate number of staff relative to the workload, leading to operational strain and potential declines in quality¹. This issue is compounded by limited access to modern technological tools and insufficient financial support. The need for both quantitative (more staff) and qualitative (better-trained staff) improvements is urgent. Similar challenges are documented in studies on media education, where resource shortages hinder both teaching and practical application of new media technologies.

5. Technological Infrastructure:

While universities are making strides in digitizing communication—using emails, social media, and ministry-developed platforms—resources remain only moderately sufficient¹. There is a strong consensus on the need for further investment in digital infrastructure and tools, as well as ongoing training for staff to maximize their utility. The Ministry of Higher Education's Digital Master Plan aims to address these gaps by promoting a strategic, phased approach to digital transformation, but implementation remains uneven across institutions.

6. Communication Strategies and Crisis Management:



Most communication cells lack proactive, well-defined crisis communication strategies, tending to react only after crises emerge¹. This reactive posture can damage the university's reputation and hinder effective management of public perception. The absence of specialists in strategic areas—such as crisis management and media data analysis—limits the cells' ability to anticipate and respond to complex scenarios. Research on digital public relations highlights the need for universities to move from didactic to experiential learning, engaging with industry professionals and adopting agile, real-time communication practices.

7. Content Quality and Audience Engagement:

The cells strive to ensure content quality by relying on official sources and producing diverse, technically sound materials¹. Speed and accuracy in information dissemination are prioritized to meet the expectations of internal and external audiences. However, systematic audience analysis and feedback mechanisms are not uniformly applied, suggesting room for improvement in tailoring content and evaluating its impact. Studies on communicative competence in Algerian universities confirm that integrating ICT and continuous feedback loops can significantly enhance audience engagement and satisfaction (Elbachari, 2024)

8. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:

Periodic performance evaluations are conducted in some universities, but not universally¹. Regular, structured assessment is essential for identifying strengths, correcting weaknesses, and fostering a culture of accountability and improvement. National discussions emphasize the importance of establishing clear metrics and benchmarks for communication effectiveness.

9. Broader Institutional and Societal Context:

The challenges faced by media and communication cells mirror broader issues in Algerian higher education, including the need for modernization, quality assurance, and alignment with international standards⁶. The digital transformation of universities is not just a technical issue but also a cultural and organizational one, requiring buy-in from all stakeholders—administrators, faculty, students, and external partners. The lack of practical training and the predominance of theoretical teaching in media studies further complicate the transition to a more dynamic, digital-first communication environment.

10. Future Directions and Recommendations:

To address these complex challenges, the study recommends:

- **Empowering Communication Cells:** Granting greater autonomy and integrating them into the official organizational structure.
- **Resource Enhancement:** Increasing both the number and specialization of staff, with a focus on continuous professional development.
- **Technological Investment:** Upgrading digital infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to modern tools.



- Strategic Planning: Developing clear, proactive communication and crisis management strategies.
- Evaluation Systems: Implementing regular, transparent performance assessments.
- Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: Fostering partnerships with industry and other universities to share best practices and innovations¹²⁵⁶⁸.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this study, it is worth mentioning the pivotal and important role played by the information and communication cells in managing and coordinating the media and communication activities of the Algerian university, and despite the efforts made to promote this important organ, we recorded the existence of several shortcomings, the most important of which are summarized below:

- The unclear position of the information and communication unit in the university's organizational structure and the absence of a legal framework.
- Lack of human and material resources in relation to the tasks assigned to the cell.
- Lack of training for the members of the cell's working group, many of whom belong to disciplines other than information and communication.
- The cell does not have a clear work plan and media strategy to deal with crises.

Based on all of the above, we decided to make a set of **recommendations**:

- The inclusion of the information and communication unit in the organizational structure of the university and giving it more powers and autonomy to make decisions and implement innovative and independent communication strategies.
- Strengthening the staff of the information and communication unit by increasing the number of members of the working group and ensuring that they are trained periodically to enable them to keep abreast of all changes and developments in various fields.
- Enabling the members of the information and communication cell to have access to all modern technological means and training them in their optimal use.
- Establishing individual and collective evaluation criteria to monitor the performance of the information and communication unit and determine the extent to which the set objectives have been achieved.
- The need for the media and communication cell to have a clear action plan and media strategy to deal with the various crises that may face the university.
- Strengthening the team of the university's media and communication cell with specialists in certain fields such as: Public Relations and Crisis Management, Media Data Analysis, etc.



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