

Implications for School Public Relations Based on Sociology

Research Overview

In response to the growing emphasis in contemporary society on organizational public relations, sociological theoretical perspectives can provide schools with support for critical reflection on this subject. This study integrated sociological perspectives including structural functionalism, functionalism, phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, and the new institutionalism to analyze school public relations research, thereby offering educators and researchers possibilities for innovative school management.

Purpose

This study integrated sociological perspectives (Blumer, 1973; Davis, 1971; Durkheim, 1898; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Parsons, 1948), Public relations literature (Lin, 2003; Yao et al., 2008), and school public relations research (Lin, 2025; Tsai, 2004), following sociological perspectives to analyze the development of public relations for schools, to inspire diverse practical approaches and critical reflection on school management among educators and researchers.

Methods

This study followed the interpretative paradigm of qualitative research and applies documentary analysis. Based on the sociological perspectives of structural functionalism, functionalism, phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, and the new institutionalism (Blumer, 1973; Davis, 1971; Durkheim, 1898; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Parsons, 1948), an analytical framework was developed. Public relations theoretical perspectives (Lin,

2003; Yao et al., 2008) were then applied, and school public relations research (Lin, 2025; Tsai, 2004) was integrated to produce research findings, from which discussions and conclusions were derived.

Results

Blumer (1973) and Meyer and Rowan (2006) have highlighted the importance of sociological research in providing rigorous analysis and interpretation of complex institutional change. Hung (1998) noted that the application of public relations is very broad, including lobbying for government, shaping corporate image, and executing community communications (as cited in Lin, 2003). This responds to Parsons's (1948) emphasis on the importance of examining differences among culture, social systems, institutions, and structures. Lin (2025) proposed that in the 12-year national education curriculum, school-designed courses encourage schools to integrate community characteristics into curriculum design, making students' learning content more local and practical. In this way, the relationship between schools and communities shifts from unilateral effort to collective momentum, with families, communities, governments, and schools each fulfilling their respective roles to form a collaborative network that collectively supports student learning—reflecting the value of cross-social comparison and institutional adjustment in response to new contexts (Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

Durkheim (1898) has noted the value of integrating sociological and psychological perspectives to analyze social functioning. The functions and purposes of internal school public relations are achieved through two-way communication and exchange of information, promoting mutual understanding, support, and cooperation, boosting morale, assisting management in decision-making, and improving school performance (Tsai, 2004). Durkheim (1898) also proposed the value of applying sociology to identify organizational conditions and

characteristics—for instance, Lin’s (2025) emphasis on encouraging school administrators and teachers to engage in public relations and providing corresponding support, including leave or funding, to incorporate this teamwork into daily work and life. This reflects Lin’s (2003) review of the perspective that public relations are viewed as a social system, focusing on the individual, interpersonal, contextual, and developmental dimensions, and further exploring how interests are maintained and facilitated and conflicts resolved.

Cross-societal institutional analysis helps to reflect on and respond to different contextual conditions (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Hung (1998) noted public relations functions such as facilitating government communication, assisting government in external publicity, and planning marketing activities for private enterprises and public welfare organizations (as cited in Lin, 2003). Tsai (2004) also synthesized how schools can, through external public relations, clarify misunderstandings and resolve crises, promote school performance to garner goodwill, and strengthen cooperative relationships of mutual trust between schools and the public, thereby securing resources, enhancing school performance, and building a positive school image. Schools that establish partnerships with communities can jointly plan and promote educational development—for example, whereas in the past parents were often merely invited to perform in school athletic events, under a partnership model parents can be invited to participate in planning discussions from the outset, collaboratively designing event content that reflects community characteristics (Lin, 2025). This responds to Davis’s (1971) emphasis on social development, supporting people in interpreting cross-disciplinary knowledge and applying it to real-world contexts.

Discussion

Public relations encompass individual, interpersonal, contextual, and developmental

dimensions, and focuses on coordination and conflict resolution. Schools that establish partnerships with communities, invite parents to participate in activity planning, and inspire the development of shared responsibility, while using information platforms and diverse media to present educational outcomes and enhance parental understanding, can then establish in-service training systems to strengthen professional capacity. By following two-way symmetrical communication principles and integrating public relations-related administrative behaviors and strategies to connect social systems, they can gradually form a clearly structured and integrated sociological theoretical framework that realizes the sustained management of school public relations.