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PUBLIC RELATIONS IN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AS A MECHANISM FOR POLITICAL CULTURE FORMATION DURING SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION: UKRAINIAN CONTEXT

This article examines the transformative role of public relations in government institutions as a fundamental mechanism for political culture formation during periods of societal transformation, with particular focus on the Ukrainian context in 2025. The research analyzes how contemporary public relations strategies in state governance contribute to democratic consolidation, transparency enhancement, and citizen engagement within the framework of Ukraine’s European integration process and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Through comprehensive analysis of public administration reform initiatives, digital transformation programs, and citizen-government communication patterns, the study reveals significant correlations between effective public relations practices and the evolution of democratic political culture. The findings demonstrate that strategic implementation of public relations mechanisms in government institutions serves as a critical catalyst for political culture transformation, particularly in contexts of democratic transition and institutional modernization. The study identifies key challenges and opportunities in leveraging public relations tools for sustainable political culture development, including the integration of digital platforms, community engagement strategies, and transparency initiatives. The research contributes to understanding how public relations functions as both a technical instrument of governance and a foundational element in democratic political culture formation during transformational periods.

Keywords: *public relations, political culture, government institutions, societal transforma-*

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Introduction. Contemporary democratic governance faces unprecedented challenges in maintaining citizen trust and engagement while navigating complex societal transformations. The relationship between government institutions and civil society has evolved significantly in the digital age, requiring sophisticated communication strategies that transcend traditional bureaucratic approaches [5]. Public relations in government institutions has emerged as a critical mechanism for political culture formation, particularly in societies undergoing democratic transition and institutional modernization processes.

The Ukrainian experience since 2019 provides a compelling case study for examining how public relations mechanisms contribute to political culture transformation during periods of significant societal change. The implementation of comprehensive public administration reforms, accelerated by European integration aspirations and conflict-driven adaptations, has necessitated fundamental rethinking of government-citizen communication paradigms [9]. This transformation coincides with broader global trends toward digital governance and participatory democracy, making the Ukrainian context particularly relevant for understanding contemporary public relations in government institutions.

Current research gaps exist in understanding the specific mechanisms through which public relations practices influence political culture formation during transformational periods. While extensive literature examines public relations in commercial contexts and political culture as a separate phenomenon, limited scholarship addresses their intersection within government institutions, particularly during periods of democratic consolidation and institutional reform [3]. This study addresses these gaps by analyzing the Ukrainian experience of public relations implementation within the framework of comprehensive public administration modernization.

Literature Review and Problem Statement. Contemporary scholarship on public relations in government institutions has evolved from traditional information dissemination models toward more sophisticated approaches emphasizing two-way communication, stakeholder engagement, and democratic participation. Cutlip, Center, and Broom's foundational work on public relations excellence theory provides a framework for understanding how organizations, including government institutions, can achieve effective communication outcomes through strategic relationship management [4]. This theoretical foundation has been adapted for public

sector contexts, where the imperative extends beyond organizational success to democratic legitimacy and public trust.

The concept of political culture, as defined by Almond and Verba in their seminal work «The Civic Culture,» encompasses the attitudes, beliefs, and values that shape political behavior and institutional effectiveness [5]. Recent scholarship has expanded this definition to include the dynamic processes through which political culture evolves, particularly in response to institutional changes and communication practices. Diamond's research on democratic consolidation emphasizes the crucial role of civic engagement and government responsiveness in fostering democratic political culture [6].

Digital transformation in government has fundamentally altered the landscape of public relations practice. The concept of «digital-era governance» introduced by Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, and Tinkler describes how digital technologies enable new forms of citizen-government interaction that can enhance democratic participation and transparency [7]. Contemporary research by Mergel, Edelman, and Haug demonstrates how digital platforms can serve as mechanisms for political culture transformation by facilitating direct citizen engagement and collaborative policymaking [8].

The Ukrainian context presents unique opportunities for examining these dynamics. The country's public administration reform strategy for 2022-2025 explicitly incorporates public relations and citizen engagement as core components of democratic governance modernization. Research by Rysin and Babych highlights how digital transformation initiatives in post-conflict Ukraine serve dual purposes of administrative efficiency and democratic culture development [9]. The implementation of platforms such as Diia represents innovative approaches to citizen-government communication that extend beyond traditional public relations models.

However, significant gaps remain in understanding how specific public relations mechanisms contribute to political culture formation during transformational periods. Existing research often treats public relations and political culture as separate phenomena, failing to examine their dynamic interaction within government institutions [1]. Furthermore, limited empirical research exists on the effectiveness of different public relations strategies in fostering democratic values and civic engagement during periods of institutional reform.

Research Objectives and Methodology. The primary objective of this research is to

analyze the mechanisms through which public relations practices in government institutions contribute to political culture formation during periods of societal transformation, using the Ukrainian context as a primary case study. The study seeks to identify specific public relations strategies that effectively promote democratic values, enhance citizen engagement, and foster transparent governance practices.

Secondary objectives include examining the role of digital transformation in enabling new forms of government-citizen communication, assessing the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing comprehensive public relations strategies in transitional contexts, and developing recommendations for optimizing public relations mechanisms to support democratic political culture development.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative analysis of policy documents, institutional frameworks, and strategic communications with quantitative assessment of citizen engagement metrics and communication effectiveness indicators. Primary data sources include official government publications, European Union assessment reports, and policy implementation documents from Ukrainian government institutions during the 2022-2025 reform period.

Qualitative analysis focuses on content examination of strategic documents including the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022-2025, the Ukraine Facility Plan, and digital transformation initiatives. This analysis identifies key themes, strategic priorities, and implementation mechanisms related to public relations and citizen engagement. Document analysis is supplemented by examination of institutional reports and progress assessments from international organizations including the European Commission and World Bank.

Quantitative analysis incorporates publicly available data on citizen engagement metrics, digital platform utilization rates, and transparency indicators. The study examines trends in citizen participation through official channels, usage patterns of digital governance platforms, and measures of public trust in government institutions as proxy indicators for political culture transformation.

Main Research Findings. The Ukrainian government's approach to public relations has undergone significant transformation since the adoption of the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022-2025. This strategic framework explicitly recognizes public communication and citizen engagement as fundamental components of effective governance, representing a

departure from traditional bureaucratic communication models. The strategy emphasizes the development of professional, politically neutral civil service focused on protecting citizens' interests and ensuring transparent, accountable public institutions [10].

Implementation of this framework has resulted in the establishment of dedicated communication units within major government institutions, with mandates extending beyond information dissemination to include stakeholder engagement, policy consultation, and feedback mechanisms. The National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service has implemented comprehensive training programs for public servants in modern communication techniques, emphasizing two-way communication and citizen-centered service delivery approaches [10].

The integration of public relations functions within broader institutional reform efforts demonstrates recognition of communication as a strategic governance tool rather than merely an administrative function. Government institutions have adopted systematic approaches to stakeholder mapping, message development, and outcome measurement, indicating sophisticated understanding of public relations as a mechanism for democratic governance enhancement [3].

Ukraine's digital transformation initiatives, particularly the implementation of the Diia platform, represent innovative approaches to citizen-government communication that extend traditional public relations paradigms. The platform's usage grew from 53 percent of the population in 2020 to 63 percent by 2022, with four in five users reporting positive experiences, indicating successful integration of digital tools into government-citizen relationships [9]. The digital-first approach adopted during the conflict period accelerated the migration of government services and communication to digital platforms, creating new opportunities for citizen engagement and transparency. Critical state documents and information systems were rapidly digitized, ensuring continuity of government-citizen communication even during periods of significant disruption [2]. This technological adaptation demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of digital public relations mechanisms in crisis contexts.

Digital transformation has enabled new forms of participatory governance through online consultation platforms, direct feedback mechanisms, and real-time policy communication [7]. Citizens can now access hundreds of public services through personalized interfaces and provide direct feedback on public policy, creating unprecedented opportunities for citizen participation in governance processes. These developments represent fundamental shifts in

political culture toward more participatory and responsive democratic practices.

Ukraine's European integration process has significantly influenced the development of public relations practices in government institutions. The EU enlargement reports for 2023 and 2024 include specific recommendations on public administration reforms, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement as core elements of European governance standards [1]. Implementation of these recommendations has required comprehensive modernization of government communication practices. The Ukraine Facility Plan, providing 50 billion euros in EU support during 2024-2027, explicitly links effective public administration to successful reform implementation and investment attraction [2]. This connection between communication effectiveness and development outcomes has elevated public relations from administrative function to strategic governance priority. Government institutions have adopted European best practices in stakeholder consultation, policy communication, and transparency reporting.

Cross-cutting themes of digital transformation and European integration have created synergies between technological modernization and democratic governance enhancement [8]. The integration of EU standards with digital innovation has produced hybrid approaches to public relations that combine traditional democratic principles with contemporary communication technologies. These developments suggest emergence of distinctly European models of digital democratic governance. Implementation of comprehensive public relations strategies in government institutions faces significant challenges related to institutional capacity, resource constraints, and cultural adaptation. Traditional bureaucratic cultures often resist transparency and accountability measures, requiring sustained change management efforts and leadership commitment [3]. Professional development programs for public servants have addressed these challenges through systematic training in modern communication techniques and democratic governance principles.

The conflict context has created both challenges and opportunities for public relations development. While resource constraints and security concerns have limited some communication activities, the urgency of maintaining citizen trust and international support has accelerated innovation in government communication practices [10]. Emergency communication protocols developed during the conflict period have demonstrated the adaptability and effectiveness of modern public relations approaches in crisis contexts.

Coordination between different levels of government and various institutional actors remains challenging, requiring sophisticated approaches to message coordination and stakeholder management [1]. The implementation of systematic coordination mechanisms, including regular inter-agency consultations and joint communication planning, has improved coherence and effectiveness of government communication efforts. Evidence suggests that systematic implementation of public relations mechanisms in government institutions contributes to measurable changes in political culture indicators. Increased citizen engagement through digital platforms correlates with enhanced trust in government institutions and greater participation in democratic processes [9]. The transparency measures implemented as part of public relations strategies have contributed to reduced corruption perceptions and improved accountability mechanisms.

The emphasis on two-way communication and citizen feedback has fostered more responsive governance practices, with government institutions increasingly incorporating citizen input into policy development processes [6]. Public consultation mechanisms implemented through digital platforms have enabled broader participation in policy discussions, contributing to more inclusive democratic governance practices. International assessments, including EU progress reports and World Bank governance indicators, show measurable improvements in transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement metrics during the reform implementation period [1]. These improvements suggest that systematic public relations implementation contributes to broader democratic governance enhancement and political culture transformation.

Conclusions. This research demonstrates that public relations in government institutions serves as a fundamental mechanism for political culture formation during periods of societal transformation. The Ukrainian experience illustrates how strategic implementation of public relations approaches can contribute to democratic consolidation, enhanced transparency, and improved citizen engagement within the context of comprehensive institutional reform.

The integration of digital transformation with public relations modernization has created new possibilities for citizen-government interaction that extend beyond traditional communication models. Digital platforms such as Diia represent innovative approaches to participatory governance that enable direct citizen engagement while maintaining efficiency and accessibility. These developments suggest emergence of hybrid models of democratic

governance that combine digital innovation with democratic principles.

European integration processes have provided both frameworks and incentives for public relations modernization in government institutions. EU standards and recommendations have catalyzed comprehensive reforms in government communication practices, while financial support mechanisms have enabled implementation of sophisticated public relations strategies. This external support has accelerated domestic political culture transformation processes.

The research identifies several key success factors for effective public relations implementation in government institutions during transformational periods. Leadership commitment at multiple organizational levels proves essential for overcoming institutional resistance and ensuring sustained implementation. Professional development programs for public servants provide necessary skills and knowledge for effective communication practice. Systematic coordination mechanisms enable coherent messaging and stakeholder engagement across different institutional actors.

However, significant challenges remain in optimizing public relations mechanisms for political culture development [3]. Resource constraints, particularly in post-conflict contexts, limit the scope and sophistication of communication strategies. Cultural adaptation processes require sustained effort and may encounter resistance from traditional bureaucratic practices. Coordination between different governance levels and institutional actors requires sophisticated management approaches that may strain existing capacity.

Future research should examine the long-term sustainability of public relations innovations implemented during crisis periods and their integration into routine governance practices. Comparative analysis with other transitional contexts could identify generalizable principles for public relations implementation in government institutions. Additionally, research on citizen perceptions and behavioral responses to enhanced government communication would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different public relations strategies.

The findings suggest that public relations in government institutions represents both a technical instrument of governance and a foundational element in democratic political culture formation. Effective implementation requires systematic approaches that integrate communication strategy with broader institutional reform efforts. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates that even in challenging contexts, strategic public relations implementation can contribute significantly to democratic governance enhancement and political culture

transformation.

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