

Symmetrical Communication in Public Relations: Dynamics, Challenges, and Opportunities, A Systematic Literature Review

Naomi Shava Try Augusta^{1*}, Dewa Ayu Geandini Adithi Kirana², Dwi Aprilia Zerlinda³

^{1,2,3}Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Negeri Surabaya

*¹Correspondence Author: naomi23augusta@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to synthesize the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities for implementing symmetrical communication in public relations practice through a systematic literature review of scientific articles from 2021–2025. The study results indicate that symmetrical communication has developed as a strategic approach that emphasizes two-way dialogue, openness, and active participation between organizations and the public, especially in the digital context. Its implementation is dynamic and contextual, influenced by leadership factors, organizational culture, and the use of technologies such as social media and artificial intelligence. However, its implementation still faces various challenges, such as the dominance of organizational control, limited transparency, and low levels of meaningful participation. On the other hand, symmetrical communication offers strategic opportunities to increase trust, engagement, relationship quality, and organizational reputation. Thus, symmetrical communication is a relevant, adaptive approach in the digital era, but requires organizational commitment to consistently implement dialogic and participatory values.

Keywords: Symmetrical Communication, Public Relations, Digital Communication, Public Engagement, Public Organization Relations

INTRODUCTION

The development of contemporary Public Relations (PR) practices has demonstrated the growing relevance of the **two-way symmetrical communication model** introduced by James E. Grunig, which emphasizes dialogue, public participation, and reciprocal relationships between organizations and stakeholders. Digitalization, social media, and increasing demands for transparency have driven a shift from one-way communication toward more dialogic and relational communication, in which organizations act as facilitators of interaction. During the 2021–2025 period, the implementation of symmetrical communication has become increasingly evident across various PR contexts. Social media has emerged as a primary space for two-way communication through active responses and the management of public feedback (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021). This practice has also expanded into inclusive communication, the governmental sector, and internal communication, fostering engagement and participatory organizational cultures (Kezhia Josephine et al., 2024). Furthermore, technologies such as sentiment analysis, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) have created opportunities for organizations to understand public perceptions in real time and develop more responsive communication strategies (Puspa Wardhani, 2025).

The **Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Model** in Public Relations is widely regarded as one of the most ideal approaches for building relationships between organizations and their publics. The concept originated from the work of James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, who classified PR practice into four primary models, with the symmetrical model representing the most ethical and effective form because it emphasizes balanced two-way communication. Within this model, organizations do not merely disseminate information but also actively listen, respond, and adapt to the needs and expectations of their publics. Its primary objective is to achieve **mutual understanding** through dialogue, negotiation, and compromise, thereby creating mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig, 2001).

Theoretically, the symmetrical communication model is supported by several major frameworks, including **Excellence Theory**, **Stakeholder Theory**, and **Dialogic Communication Theory**. Within Excellence Theory, James E. Grunig argues that effective organizations are those that integrate two-way communication into strategic decision-making processes and cultivate long-term relationships based on trust. Meanwhile, Stakeholder Theory, proposed by R. Edward Freeman (1984), emphasizes that organizations must consider the interests of all stakeholders through open and participatory communication. In addition, Dialogic Communication Theory developed by Michael L. Kent and Maureen Taylor (2002) highlights the importance of interactivity, transparency, and public engagement in communication processes, particularly within digital environments.

Despite the growing prominence of symmetrical communication in modern public relations practice, existing research on the symmetrical communication model continues to reveal several conceptual and empirical gaps. Much of the literature tends to position symmetrical communication as an ideal normative concept without sufficiently considering the complexities of its implementation in real-world settings. Two-way communication and dialogue are often regarded as universal solutions to organizational communication challenges, even though such approaches may not always be relevant or easily applicable across all communication situations.

The dominant focus on internal organizational communication has also limited scholarly understanding of symmetrical communication dynamics within external communication contexts, digital environments, crisis communication, and multi-stakeholder relationships. Furthermore, organizational realities often reveal tensions between the principles of symmetrical communication and strategic communication practices that remain influenced by managerial control, limited information transparency, and low levels of meaningful public participation in communication-related decision-making processes. These conditions highlight a persistent gap between the ideal values of two-way communication and the hierarchical nature of many organizational structures.

At the same time, advances in digital technology, social media, and artificial intelligence have created new opportunities for more interactive and personalized organizational communication. However, the integration of the symmetrical communication model with digital transformation remains insufficiently explored within contemporary public relations literature. Recent studies have begun to emphasize the importance of emotional

intelligence and AI-based technologies in fostering organization–public relationships, yet their connections to the symmetrical communication framework still require systematic academic mapping and analysis.

Building upon these phenomena and research gaps, this study aims to synthesize empirical findings regarding the dynamics of symmetrical communication implementation. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the primary challenges associated with implementing two-way symmetrical communication and to examine the strategic opportunities it offers. Practically, this study is expected to provide a conceptual foundation for public relations practitioners in designing communication strategies that are more dialogic, adaptive to digital transformation, and oriented toward the development of sustainable organization–public relationships.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is the symmetrical communication model implemented across various organizational contexts and digital environments in public relations practice?
2. What are the primary challenges in implementing two-way symmetrical communication, particularly concerning organizational control, transparency, and public participation?
3. What strategic opportunities does symmetrical communication offer for enhancing the quality of organization–public relationships in the digital era?

METHOD

This study employed a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from scholarly articles relevant to the topic “*Symmetrical Communication Models in Public Relations: Dynamics, Challenges, and Opportunities.*” The SLR method was selected because it enables the generation of transparent, structured, and evidence-based insights from existing literature. To ensure that the review process was conducted systematically and could be replicated, this study adopted the **PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)** framework as a guideline for article screening and selection in accordance with international standards. The implementation of the SLR followed the procedures established by the PRISMA framework, which is specifically designed to enhance the quality and transparency of systematic review reporting.

The article search and selection process was conducted through several stages of filtration using keywords aligned with the research topic. The primary keywords were determined based on the focus of the study, namely “**symmetrical communication**” and “**public relations.**” These keywords were combined using Boolean operators such as **AND** and **OR** to refine and narrow the search results. Literature searches were performed across several prominent academic databases, including **ScienceDirect, Sage Journals, Taylor & Francis, Academia, Emerald Insight, MDPI, Frontiers, Springer, and Google Scholar.** To ensure the relevance and currency of the findings, only articles published between **2021 and 2025** were included in the review.

Table 1. Search Strategy

Databases	Syntax	Article
Science Direct	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	16
Sage Journals	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	10
Taylor & Francis	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	22
Academia	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	5
Emerald Insight	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	15
MDPI	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	2
Frontiers	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	2
Springer	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	6
Google Scholar	("symmetrical communication") AND ("public relations")	24

Following the initial retrieval process, the identified articles were further screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The **inclusion criteria** were as follows:

1. The article addressed topics relevant to the study, specifically discussing symmetrical communication within the context of public relations.
2. The article was published between **2021 and 2025**.
3. The publication was a peer-reviewed scholarly journal article.
4. The full text was available and accessible.

The **exclusion criteria** included:

1. Articles that did not discuss symmetrical communication or were unrelated to public relations.
2. Non-scholarly publications, including review papers, conference proceedings, dissertations, or theses.
3. Articles without accessible full-text versions.
4. Duplicate publications or records.

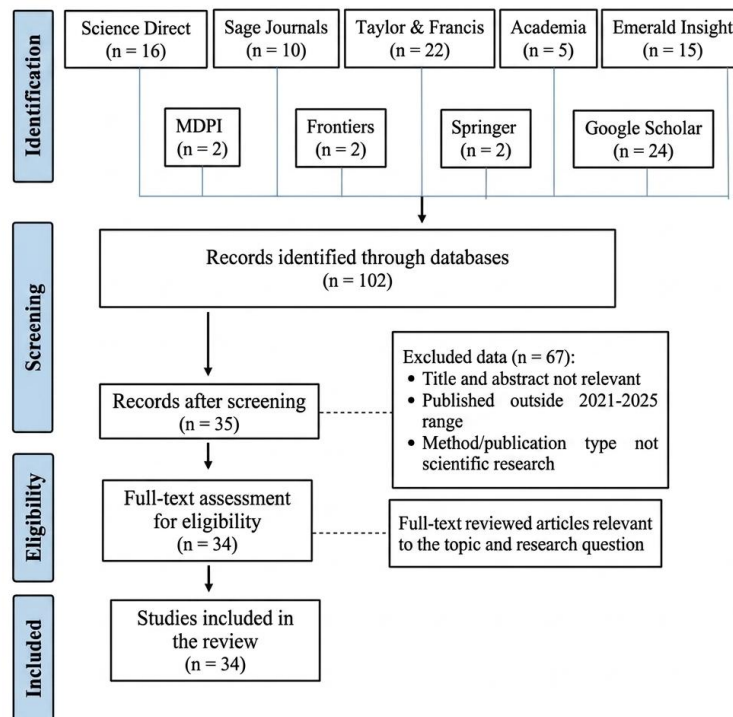


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Articles that met the selection criteria were subsequently analyzed using a descriptive synthesis approach. Several key aspects were mapped and examined, including the authors and publication year, article title, research methodology, principal findings, identified challenges, and potential opportunities. This analytical process was conducted to address the research questions concerning the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities associated with the implementation of the symmetrical communication model in public relations.

Table 2. Article Review

No.	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
1.	Chuqing Dong & Jordan Morehouse (2022)	Toward a caring government: Advancing ethical government public relations with a care-based relationship cultivation model	Qualitative - in-depth interviews (semi-structured interviews)	Care ethics is essential in building government-public relationships and is multidimensional	The concept of care remains abstract, subjective, and difficult to operationalize in PR practice	Developing a care-based relationship model as a practical guide for implementing ethics in government communication

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
2.	Rickard Andersson (2024)	Public Relations Strategizing: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Doing of Strategy in Public Relations	Conceptual / qualitative - literature-based theory development (strategy-as-practice & practice theory)	PR strategy is dynamic (not merely linear, but also emergent in daily practice)	The dominance of rational-linear approaches makes strategies rigid and less adaptive	Utilizing the strategy-as-practice approach to understand strategy as a flexible and contextual process
3.	Yeonsoo Kim, Iccha Basnyat & Shana Meganck (2023)	The Role of Base Crisis Response and Dialogic Competency: Employee Response to COVID-19 Internal Crisis Communication	Quantitative - online survey of full-time employees in the US, statistical analysis (variable relationship/mediation modeling)	Instructive and dialogic communication increases employee trust, satisfaction, and support	Internal crisis communication is often inconsistent and lacks integration of emotional aspects	Integrating informative and empathetic communication into organizational crisis communication strategies
4.	Marlene S. Neill & Shannon A. Bowen (2021)	Employee Perceptions of ethical listening in U.S. Organization	Quantitative - national survey of 300 employees in the US, descriptive and variable relationship analysis	Ethical listening plays a crucial role in organization-employee relationships	Organizational culture lacks openness, minimizes transparency, and triggers employee silence	Strengthening ethical, open, and participatory listening systems to enhance trust and engagement
5.	Suemay Arif, Kim A. Johnston, Anne Lane, Amanda	A Strategic Employee Attribute Scale: Mediating Role of Internal	Quantitative - survey of 530 employees (Malaysian government organizations), factor analysis &	Internal communication enhances engagement and shapes strategic	Lack of understanding and research on how communication shapes	Developing internal communication strategies to foster strategic behaviors,

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
	Beatson (2023)	Communication and Employee Engagement	SEM (Structural Equation Modeling)	employees	employees' strategic attributes	thinking, and contributions among employees
6.	Men, L. R., & Tsai, W. H. S. (2022)	Carving Start-up Character: Effects of Symmetrical Communication on Start-up Corporate Character, Customer-Start-up Identification, and Customer Advocacy	Quantitative through survey with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach	Symmetrical communication positively influences the formation of start-up corporate character, increases customer-start-up identification, and drives customer advocacy	Start-ups often face limitations in strategic communication resources and consistency of organizational identity in the early phases of growth	Implementing transparent two-way communication can serve as an effective strategy to build reputation, customer loyalty, and start-up sustainability from the early stages
7.	Gool, K. (2022)	Social media engagement by PR practitioners during COVID-19	Qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with Public Relations practitioners regarding social media engagement practices during the pandemic	PR practitioners utilized social media to build two-way interactions with consumers during the pandemic	PR practitioners experienced high work pressure and resource constraints in maintaining consistent two-way communication	Social media serves as a strategic space to implement symmetrical communication in real-time between organizations and the public
8.	Huang, Q., Jin, J., Lynn, B. J., & Men, L. R. (2021)	Relationship cultivation and public engagement via social media	Quantitative research using surveys and statistical analysis to examine the relationship between relationship	Relationship-based social media communication enhances public engagement and	Social media algorithm changes limit the visibility of organizational communication	The use of social media data analytics can optimize engagement-based symmetrical

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
			cultivation strategies and public engagement	organization relationship quality	on, so dialogue is not always optimal	communication strategies
9.	Jiang, Y. (Nicole), & Park, H. (2022)	CSR communication networks on social media	Mixed-methods approach through Social Network Analysis and content analysis of CSR communication on social media	Dialogue-based CSR communication strategies influence public responses and strengthen symmetrical relationships	Digital audience fragmentation makes it difficult for CSR communication to reach all stakeholders evenly	Social media provides opportunities to build collaborative, relationship-based CSR communication
10.	Kim, Y., & Meganck, S. (2025)	Dialogic internal communication & corporate social advocacy	Quantitative research using employee surveys to measure the impact of dialogic internal communication on corporate social advocacy	Dialogic internal communication increases employee support for corporate social advocacy	Differences in personal values between employees and the organization can hinder the acceptance of corporate advocacy	Internal dialogue can strengthen the role of employees as organizational ambassadors

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
11.	Lee, Y. (2022)	Dialogic internal communication and employees' safety behavior	Quantitative approach with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Two-way internal communication improves employee safety behavior	Hierarchical organizational culture restricts participation in two-way communication	Symmetrical communication can be utilized as an organizational safety management

No.	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
				during crises	n	strategy
12.	Majumdar, S., Dasgupta, S. A., Hassan, Y., Behl, A., & Pereira, V. (2025)	Symmetrical internal communication & innovation capability	Survey-based quantitative research and regression analysis	Symmetrical internal communication plays a role in enhancing organizational innovation through digital leadership	Top-down communication structures inhibit the exchange of innovative ideas	Internal Public Relations can become a driver of innovation based on participatory communication
13.	Xiaomeng Lan, Baobao Song, & Spiro Kiouis (2024)	Gamifying Public Engagement on Sustainability Issues: From Motivational Affordances to the Effectiveness of Symmetrical Public Relations	Quantitative survey of corporate sustainability gamification platform users (N = 417); analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Gamification based on two-way symmetrical communication (feedback & value co-creation) increases public involvement by fulfilling psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness) and strengthens organization-public relationships, thereby enhancing engagement	The effectiveness of gamification heavily depends on the context of use, platform design, and the organization's ability to meet users' psychological needs	Gamification has the potential to become a digital Public Relations strategy to boost public engagement, sustainability communication, and participatory organization-stakeholder relationships
14.	Men, L. R., Zhou, A., & Sunny Tsai, W.	Chatbot social conversation for organizational	Mixed methods through experiments and user	Chatbot technology strengthens organizational listening and	AI-based interactions are still perceived as less personal	AI technology opens new opportunities for sustainable digital

No.	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
	H. (2022)	listening	surveys regarding the use of organizational chatbots	transparency in organization-public relationships	by some users	symmetrical communication
15.	Pons, A., Vintrò, C., Rius, J., & Vilaplana, J. (2021)	CSR impact in mining industries	Qualitative approach through case analysis of the mining industry	CSR implementation impacts organizational legitimacy and stakeholder relationships	Conflicts of interest between companies and communities often hinder effective dialogue	CSR based on participatory communication can improve the sustainability of organization-community relationships
16.	Song, B., & Tao, W. (2022)	Internal CSR outcomes through dialogic communication	Quantitative research using employee surveys	Dialogic communication strengthens relational outcomes and positive behaviors of employees	Lack of consistency in two-way communication reduces the effectiveness of internal CSR implementation	The integration of internal communication and CSR strengthens organization-employee relationships
17.	Tkalac Verčič, A. (2021)	Internal communication satisfaction	Quantitative approach through internal communication satisfaction surveys	Internal communication satisfaction serves as an indicator of successful symmetrical organization-employee relationships	The dominance of one-way communication remains a common organizational practice	Symmetrical communication has the potential to increase employee trust and loyalty
18.	Yue, C. A., Men, L. R., &	Internal communication & emotional	Survey-based quantitative	Open internal communication enhances	A lack of organizational empathy can	Internal Public Relations plays a role in

No.	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
	Ferguson, M. A. (2021)	culture	research	employee organizational identification	weaken internal relationships	shaping relationship-based organizational culture
19.	Zhou, A., & Xu, S. (2021)	Digital PR through dialogic principles	Conceptual qualitative approach through the analysis of dialogic communication theory in Digital PR	Dialogic principles expand symmetrical communication practices in digital PR environments	Many organizations still use a one-way broadcasting communication model	Digital PR allows for an evolution toward sustainable participatory and symmetrical communication
20.	Andreu Perez et al. (2022)	Constructive Roles of Organizational Two-Way Symmetrical Communication: Workplace Pseudo-Information Gatekeeping	Quantitative	Two-way symmetrical communication improves the quality of organization-employee relationships, encouraging gatekeeping behavior (combating misinformation) with trust as the primary mediator	The main challenge lies in the difficulty of controlling the spread of misinformation and weak organization-employee relationships that hinder two-way communication effectiveness. A prior lack of symmetrical communication also leaves employees less engaged in supporting the organization	Symmetrical communication allows organizations to build high-quality relationships that foster employee trust and involvement. This strengthens the employee's role as a gatekeeper to prevent and combat misinformation and safeguard organizational reputation

No.	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
21.	Yeunjae Lee & Jarim Kim (2021)	Cultivating employee creativity through strategic internal communication: The role of leadership, symmetry, and feedback seeking behaviors	Quantitative	Symmetrical communication is influenced by leadership, which can increase feedback-seeking behavior, thereby impacting employee creativity	Implementing two-way symmetrical communication in organizations faces challenges from top-down communication dominance and hierarchical cultures that restrict openness, leaving employees less motivated to voice opinions or participate actively in communication and decision-making	Symmetrical communication offers strategic opportunities by creating an open, supportive, and trust-based communication environment that encourages employees to actively seek feedback, exchange ideas, and enhance creativity and organization-employee relationship quality
22.	Lee et al. (2022)	Exploring the Interrelationship and Roles of Employee–Organization Relationship Outcomes between Symmetrical Internal Communication and Employee Job Engagement	Quantitative (survey, N=804), SEM (Structural Equation Modeling)	SIC is only significant for communal EOR; Communal EOR most strongly influences relationship quality; Satisfaction is the only variable significant to engagement	The implementation of symmetrical communication faces limitations due to organization-employee power imbalances, which affect control mutuality and restrict full participation	Symmetrical communication enables the formation of strong communal relationships, enhancing trust, satisfaction, and commitment, and driving employee job engagement through open and reciprocal

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
					despite efforts toward open communication	interactions

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
23.	Chyntia Novy Girsang & Dorien Kartikawangi (2021)	Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Pattern: Company Strategy to Build Engagement Through Social Media	Qualitative, case study (Sinar Mas Instagram), interviews & observation	Companies implement two-way communication through interactive and responsive content, making relationships more horizontal and dialogic so engagement forms at a moderate (individual) level. The dialogue is not fully symmetrical yet, but the onset of symmetrical communication increases engagement, loyalty, and reputation	The implementation of two-way symmetrical communication is still limited to surface-level interactions, where dialogue focuses more on increasing engagement and gathering public responses rather than fully achieving an exchange of influence or behavioral adjustment between the organization and the public	Symmetrical communication provides opportunities to build strong engagement through interaction, dialogue, and reciprocal responses on social media, thereby enhancing trust, loyalty, and the quality of organization-public relationships
24.	Lee & Kim (2022)	The impacts of CEO leadership	Quantitative (survey,	Relational leadership enhances	Implementing two-way symmetrical	Symmetrical communication provides

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
		behaviors on employees' affective commitment and scouting behavior: the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication	SEM, n=405)	symmetrical communication, thereby increasing commitment and communication behavior. Task leadership is not significant	communication faces challenges because it drives participation, dissent, and negotiation processes that can lead to inefficiency and slow down decision-making, potentially conflicting with the task-oriented control needs of the organization	strategic opportunities by creating an open, dialogic, and employee-empowering communication environment, proved to increase affective commitment and foster active behaviors like information searching and sharing (scouting behavior) to support organizational effectiveness
25.	Al Hadeed et al. (2024)	Role of Public Relations Practices in Content Management: The Mediating Role of New Media Platforms	Quantitative & Case Study	PR is significant to new media, which in turn is significant to two-way communication. Two-way communication is significant to content management, but PR is not directly significant to two-way communication	The implementation of two-way symmetrical communication faces hurdles from strong organizational control dominance, limitations in consistent transparency practices, and public participation that is often limited or not fully equal in the communication	Symmetrical communication opens opportunities to build higher-quality relationships through authentic two-way dialogue, increased transparency, and the utilization of digital media that allows for more active and responsive public involvement

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
					n process	
26.	Yeunjae Lee et al. (2021)	Diversity-oriented leadership, internal communication, and employee outcomes: a perspective of racial minority employees	Quantitative (Survey & SEM)	Symmetrical communication increases organizational justice and employee engagement, and indirectly impacts employee advocacy through mediation. Its implementation is influenced by leadership and still faces power imbalances	Implementing two-way symmetrical communication faces hurdles from organizational control dominance that limits information openness, so transparency is not yet optimal and public/employee participation in the communication and decision-making process is not fully accommodated	Symmetrical communication provides strategic opportunities to build higher-quality organization-public relationships through open two-way dialogue, increasing perceptions of justice, trust, and active public/employee involvement in supporting organizational goals
27.	Zhou & Xu (2022)	Computer mediation vs. dialogic communication: How media affordances affect organization-public relationship building	Quantitative (survey & SEM)	Social presence is the most crucial factor in creating dialogic communication; bandwidth supports, while anonymity is not very significant	Mismatch between ideal dialogic communication (based on face-to-face interaction, openness, and mutualism) and digital media-based communication, where affordances like	Leveraging media affordances, particularly social presence and bandwidth, which are proven to significantly increase dialogic perceptions such as empathy,

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
					anonymity and media limitations can hinder the optimal delivery of empathy, responsiveness, and dialogic quality	transparency, and involvement, thereby strengthening organization-public relationships in digital environments
28.	Sun, Li, Lee, Tao (2021)	The Role of Symmetrical Internal Communication in Improving Employee Experiences and Organizational Identification During COVID-19 Pandemic-Induced Organizational Change	Quantitative (survey, SEM, n=490)	Symmetrical communication improves change communication quality, organizational support, positive emotions, and organizational identification. Indirect effects through mediation (support & emotions) strengthen organization-employee relationships	Hindered by strong organizational control dominance, transparency limitations in opening up decision-making processes, and public participation that is often symbolic and has not fully influenced organizational policy	Building higher-quality relationships through open dialogue, increased trust, and more active public involvement, further reinforced by the utilization of digital media as a space for two-way interaction
29.	Thelen & Formanck (2022)	Culture and internal communication in Chile: Linking ethical organizational culture, transparent communication, and	Quantitative (survey & SEM)	An ethical organizational culture significantly drives transparent internal communication, which then enhances perceptions of	Lies in transparency demands that require organizations to be accountable and open to public criticism, as well as	By reinforcing transparency and involvement, which increases trust and relationship investment perceptions, thereby

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
		employee advocacy		organization-employee relationship investment (PRI) and ultimately strengthens employee advocacy behavior	difficulties in consistently involving stakeholder participation through feedback seeking and management	encouraging the formation of employee advocacy as an indicator of organization-public relationship quality
30.	Lee et al. (2022)	Symmetry, inclusion and workplace conflicts: conflict management effects of two leadership strategies on employee advocacy and departure	Explanative quantitative (survey)	Symmetrical communication is proven to increase employee advocacy and reduce turnover intentions, whereas workplace conflict increases both advocacy and turnover. Inclusive management is contextual and can have a negative impact at high conflict levels, making symmetrical communication the most consistent strategy in strengthening relationships with the internal public	How organizations consistently build an open communication culture, support the expression of differing opinions, and balance organizational and employee interests during workplace conflicts. Without strong symmetrical communication practices, workplace conflicts tend to increase employees' intentions to leave	Enhancing employee advocacy and reducing turnover intention through the creation of a more open, supportive, and trust-based working relationship. This strengthens organizational effectiveness in managing conflict and maintaining relationship quality with the internal public
31.	Ganga	Remote	Quantitative -	Two-way	Remote work	Strengthening

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
	Sasidharan Dhanesh & Gaelle Picherit-Duthler (2021)	internal crisis communication (RICC) - role of internal communication in predicting employee engagement during remote work in a crisis	using employee surveys with communication and engagement variables	communication & crisis communication content serve as the primary predictors of employee engagement	during crises causes disengagement, anxiety, and a lack of interaction	internal communication based on two-way models + technology to sustain employee engagement
32.	Joon Soo Lim & Hua Jiang (2021)	Linking Authenticity in CSR Communication to Organization-Public Relationship Outcomes: Integrating Theories of Impression Management and Relationship Management	Quantitative - using survey methods on respondents	CSR authenticity (genuineness, identity, consistency) increases trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality	Public skepticism is high in the digital era due to the ease of checking communication mismatches	Utilizing digital media for transparent and authentic CSR communication to strengthen long-term relationships
33.	Dean Mundy (2021)	From Relationship Management to Change Empowerment: Shifting Public Relations Theory to Prioritize Publics	Qualitative / Conceptual - using in-depth interview methods and/or open-ended surveys	PR shifts from mere relationship management to public empowerment	Organizations must adapt to new public demands (Gen Z, social issues, high transparency)	PR can act as an agent of social change by actively involving the public
34.	Nur Uysal	Resolved:	Conceptual /	Dialogic	Challenges	Opportunities

No .	Author & Year	Title	Research Method	Findings	Challenges	Opportunities
	(2024)	Exploring the Role of Dialogic Engagement in Shareholder Activism for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Qualitative - using literature review / conceptual analysis or interviews	engagement drives public participation and strengthens public influence over organizational decisions	stem from digital dynamics / changing public behaviors	lie in adaptive, digital, and relationship-based communication strategies

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the selected articles, several key themes were identified that reflect the dynamics of implementing the symmetrical communication model in public relations practice, the major challenges associated with implementing two-way symmetrical communication, and the strategic opportunities offered by symmetrical communication.

A. Dynamics of Symmetrical Communication Implementation in Public Relations Practice

Based on the synthesis of all reviewed articles, the implementation of the symmetrical communication model in public relations practice demonstrates a dynamic, contextual, and increasingly digitalized character. Within organizational settings, symmetrical communication has evolved into a strategic mechanism that connects communication processes with leadership and employee behavior. Two-way communication characterized by openness, feedback, and participation has been shown to strengthen organization–employee relationships while facilitating the alignment of organizational and individual goals (Hassan et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2025).

The implementation of two-way symmetrical communication in public relations practice reflects a shift from traditional one-way communication models toward participatory and relationship-oriented dialogue. In the context of internal organizational communication, symmetrical communication is regarded as a normative model that emphasizes openness, trust, and balanced information exchange. This is reflected in the characteristics of symmetrical communication, including “trust, credibility, openness, relationships, reciprocity, network symmetry, horizontal communication, feedback, adequacy of information, employee-centered style, tolerance for disagreement, and negotiation” (Lee & Kim, 2022). Consequently, communication is no longer merely the transmission of messages from management to employees but rather an interactive process involving mutual adaptation and shared understanding.

The dynamics of symmetrical communication implementation are also strongly influenced by leadership factors. Research indicates that communication from leaders, both at

supervisory and executive levels, “positively influence symmetrical internal communication system” (Lee & Kim, 2022). This finding suggests that symmetrical communication depends not only on communication systems but also on leadership communication styles that encourage participation and dialogue. Furthermore, symmetrical communication contributes significantly to the quality of organization–employee relationships. Perceptions of symmetrical communication are associated with increased trust, satisfaction, and commitment (Lee et al., 2022). In the context of organizational change, symmetrical communication also enhances employee experiences and organizational identification by involving employees in decision-making processes (Sun et al., 2021).

Digital transformation has further expanded these dynamics by enabling communication to occur in real time, across organizational hierarchies, and with greater flexibility. This development fosters higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing within organizations. In digital environments, symmetrical communication has evolved into dialogic communication facilitated through social media platforms, where organizations establish interactions through active responses and reciprocal communication practices (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021).

However, the dynamics of symmetrical communication in the digital era are not entirely ideal. Technological factors such as bandwidth, social presence, and anonymity significantly affect the quality of dialogue. Zhou and Xu (2022) found that “bandwidth and social presence affordances facilitate dialogic communication while anonymity slightly inhibits it.” Moreover, two-way communication during crises often tends to be reactive and situational rather than consistently dialogic (Gool, 2022).

In the context of public policy, symmetrical communication has developed into a participatory communication model that involves citizens in decision-making processes, although its implementation remains influenced by social complexities and conflicts of interest. Similarly, Andersson (2024) argues that public relations strategies are dynamic and socially constructed through practice, meaning that symmetrical communication is not always implemented in its ideal form. Overall, the dynamics of symmetrical communication indicate that its practice is adaptive, relational, and highly dependent on organizational contexts and digital environments.

B. Challenges in Implementing Symmetrical Communication

The literature synthesis reveals that the implementation of symmetrical communication faces a variety of structural, relational, and contextual challenges. The most dominant challenge is the imbalance of power within organizations, where communication continues to be dominated by top-down approaches despite the conceptual emphasis on equality and mutual influence (Hassan et al., 2024).

In practice, opportunities for employee and public participation are often limited. Even in organizational change communication, participation may be largely symbolic, as “input solicitation sometimes might merely create an appearance of participation” (Sun et al., 2021). This suggests that organizations frequently maintain control over strategic decisions

despite creating spaces for dialogue. Consequently, the principle of mutual influence, which is central to symmetrical communication, is not always fully realized.

Another significant challenge is limited transparency. Organizations often filter or selectively disclose information, thereby reducing the quality of dialogue and hindering the achievement of mutual understanding. Transparency is also heavily influenced by organizational culture, where “ethical organizational culture plays a critical role in nurturing transparent communication” (Thelen & Formanchuk, 2022).

Furthermore, low levels of public and employee participation constitute an additional obstacle. Such limitations are often caused by insufficient opportunities for dialogue and low levels of trust (Kim et al., 2024; Hassan et al., 2024). In digital environments, these challenges become even more complex due to the spread of misinformation, causing communication efforts to focus more on clarification than genuine dialogue (Gool & Van Zyl, 2024). Technological factors such as anonymity may also inhibit dialogic communication because “anonymity slightly inhibits dialogic communication” (Zhou & Xu, 2022).

Within public policy contexts, participation frequently remains symbolic and does not necessarily influence final decisions. Consistent with this observation, Kim et al. (2023) identified tensions between organizational control and openness, while Mundy (2021) emphasized that public empowerment remains difficult to achieve within hierarchical organizational structures.

Overall, the challenges of symmetrical communication reflect an ongoing tension between its normative ideals—dialogue, participation, and equality—and organizational realities characterized by managerial control, limited transparency, and suboptimal participation.

C. Strategic Opportunities of Symmetrical Communication

The literature indicates that symmetrical communication offers substantial strategic opportunities for enhancing the quality of organization–public relationships, particularly in the digital era. Within organizational contexts, symmetrical communication has been shown to increase trust, commitment, and employee engagement. These findings are supported by Kim et al. (2023), who demonstrated that dialogic communication enhances trust and stakeholder support, and by Dhanesh and Picherit-Duthler (2021), who found that two-way communication strengthens employee engagement through stronger social relationships.

In addition, authentic and transparent communication plays a critical role in fostering high-quality relationships between organizations and their stakeholders (Lim & Jiang, 2021). Empathy-based communication approaches also contribute to stronger relationships, as illustrated by the concept of care-based communication proposed by Dong and Morehouse (2022).

Symmetrical communication further functions as an enabler of organizational innovation by facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration. Research demonstrates that

two-way communication serves as a mediator between digital leadership and organizational innovation capability (Hassan et al., 2024). Through participatory communication practices, organizations can encourage the exchange of ideas and create environments conducive to innovation.

In external communication contexts, particularly on social media platforms, symmetrical communication provides opportunities to enhance public engagement, strengthen crisis communication management, and maintain organizational reputation in real time (Gool & Van Zyl, 2024). Moreover, it enables organizations to continuously evaluate and adjust their communication strategies, “leading to the design, evaluation, and alteration of content that is acceptable and liked by their audiences” (Al Hadeed et al., 2023).

From an internal perspective, symmetrical communication also strengthens the role of employees as strategic stakeholders. This is evident from findings indicating that “loyal and satisfied employees voluntarily debunk and combat pseudo-information” (Andreu Perez et al., 2025). Thus, employees become active contributors to organizational credibility and reputation management.

In public policy contexts, symmetrical communication enhances policy legitimacy and promotes more inclusive decision-making processes. Furthermore, it encourages more active public participation, which may ultimately influence organizational decisions and policy outcomes (Uysal, 2024).

Therefore, symmetrical communication should not be viewed merely as a communication tool but rather as a strategic approach for building strong, participatory, and sustainable relationships between organizations and their stakeholders in the digital era. Through its emphasis on dialogue, transparency, mutual understanding, and participation, symmetrical communication provides organizations with significant opportunities to strengthen stakeholder relationships, enhance organizational effectiveness, and maintain long-term legitimacy in an increasingly complex communication environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of scholarly articles published between 2021 and 2025, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the dynamics of implementing the symmetrical communication model in public relations practice across various organizational and digital contexts.

First, symmetrical communication has evolved from a theoretical concept into a strategic communication practice that emphasizes two-way dialogue, information transparency, and active public engagement through the utilization of digital media and social networking platforms. The reviewed studies indicate that organizations increasingly prioritize relational and participatory approaches in building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders.

Second, the literature reveals several implementation challenges, including the continued dominance of organizational control in communication processes, hierarchical communication cultures, limited transparency, and gaps in public participation. Furthermore, the workload pressures experienced by public relations practitioners, along with the

complexities of digital communication environments, influence the consistency with which ideal two-way communication can be implemented.

Third, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of symmetrical communication contributes positively to enhancing public trust, stakeholder engagement, crisis communication effectiveness, organizational reputation, and legitimacy. These outcomes highlight the strategic value of symmetrical communication in fostering sustainable organization–public relationships.

In conclusion, symmetrical communication can be understood as an adaptive public relations approach that is highly relevant in the digital era. However, its effectiveness depends largely on an organization's commitment to consistently applying dialogic principles, communication ethics, transparency, and meaningful public participation. Future public relations practices should therefore focus on integrating technological innovation with the core values of symmetrical communication to strengthen relationship-building and organizational sustainability.

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