

Public relations from a Latin American perspective

Las relaciones públicas desde la perspectiva latinoamericana

Relações públicas numa perspetiva latino-americana

Francisco-José Pradana, Universidad Europea de Madrid, Madrid, España
(franciscojose.pradana@universidadeuropea.es)

ABSTRACT | This paper analyzes the possible existence of a Latin American approach to Public Relations that differs from Anglo-Saxon and European perspectives. It examines how the cultural, historical, and socioeconomic characteristics of Latin America affect the professional practice of Public Relations, especially in the southern part of the continent. Special attention is given to the role of Public Relations professionals as a prominent profile in Latin America, emphasizing the nature of their training and the way their role adapts and responds to regional specificities. The aim of this research is to provide a clear and precise understanding of the practices and specific characteristics of public relations in Latin America and its relationship with European and North American approaches. The analysis is based on a literature review that examines the state of the art and functioning of public relations as a discipline in Latin America. The findings suggest that Public Relations professional in Latin America is a significant figure that responds and adapts to regional characteristics, reinforcing the notion of a distinctive current in public relations in this region. The research emphasizes the importance of considering cultural and contextual diversity in the practice of Public Relations. Despite Latin America's long history of academic development and established public relations professionals, North American and European conceptualizations and trends continue to dominate theoretical discussions and professional routines.

KEYWORDS: Public Relations; Latin-American; communication; organizational communication

HOW TO CITE

Pradana, F. (2024) Las relaciones públicas desde la perspectiva latinoamericana. *Cuadernos.info*, (58), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.58.68727>

RESUMEN | Este trabajo busca analizar la posibilidad de que exista una corriente latinoamericana en el ámbito de las Relaciones públicas que se distinga de la visión anglosajona y europea. En él, se aborda cómo las características culturales, históricas y socioeconómicas de América Latina podrían influir en la práctica profesional de las Relaciones públicas, especialmente en el cono sur del continente. Se presta especial atención a la figura del relacionista público como un perfil profesional destacado en América Latina, desde la naturaleza de su recorrido formativo y cómo este rol se adapta y responde a las particularidades regionales. La investigación busca contribuir de forma sencilla y clara a una comprensión más profunda de las prácticas y especificidades de las Relaciones públicas en América Latina y su relación con los enfoques europeos y norteamericanos. Se realiza un análisis con un enfoque basado en la investigación bibliográfica, con una revisión del estado de la cuestión acerca del funcionamiento de las Relaciones públicas, como disciplina, en América Latina. Los resultados muestran que la figura del relacionista público en América Latina es un actor crucial que se adapta y responde a las características regionales, reforzando la idea de una corriente específica en las Relaciones públicas en la región latinoamericana. Al mismo tiempo, se destaca la importancia de considerar la diversidad cultural y contextual en la práctica de las Relaciones públicas. Aunque América Latina tiene una larga historia de desarrollo académico y de profesionales de las Relaciones públicas bien establecidos, la conceptualización y tendencias norteamericanas y europeas siguen prevaleciendo en los debates teóricos y en las prácticas profesionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Relaciones públicas; Latinoamérica; comunicación; comunicación organizacional

RESUMO | Este trabalho pretende analisar a possibilidade de existência de uma corrente latino-americana no campo das relações públicas que se diferencie da visão anglo-saxônica e europeia. Aborda como as características culturais, históricas e socioeconômicas da América Latina poderiam influenciar a prática profissional das relações públicas, especialmente no cone sul do continente. É dada especial atenção à figura do profissional de relações públicas como um perfil profissional de destaque na América Latina, a partir da própria natureza de sua formação e de como esse papel se adapta e responde às particularidades regionais. A investigação procura, de forma simples e clara, contribuir para uma compreensão mais profunda das práticas e particularidades das relações públicas na América Latina e sua relação com as abordagens europeias e norte-americanas. Estabelece a análise, por meio de uma abordagem baseada na pesquisa bibliográfica, com uma revisão do estado da arte, do funcionamento das relações públicas, como disciplina, na América Latina. Os resultados encontrados mostram que a figura do profissional de relações públicas na América Latina emerge como um ator crucial que se adapta e responde às características regionais, reforçando a ideia de uma corrente particular nas relações públicas na região latino-americana. Ao mesmo tempo, a pesquisa destaca a importância de considerar a diversidade cultural e contextual na prática das relações públicas. Embora a América Latina tenha uma longa história de desenvolvimento acadêmico e profissionais de relações públicas bem estabelecidos, a concetualização e as tendências norteamericanas e europeias continuam a prevalecer nos debates teóricos e nas práticas profissionais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: relações públicas; América Latina; comunicação; comunicação organizacional

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations, as a discipline still has a weak theory, with a rather practical approach. This situation is unusual because it points to a discrepancy between research and practice. If practice is not supported by research findings, it is difficult for research to be solid. Research and practice in Public Relations in non-Western regions show that intercultural, cultural and multicultural Public Relations are increasingly needed as emerging and salient subfields of related disciplines. Likewise, Public Relations as a discipline should be well prepared for future trends of digitalization, such as big data, corporate and government surveillance, digital sharing, industry, artificial intelligence and social media. From a Latin American perspective, a major challenge for PR is to face and respond to the conflicts between consumers, workers, citizens, genders and the environment that are instigated by the very companies or governments that PR is supposed to defend, promote and sometimes even whitewash (Gezging, 2019).

Growth of Public Relations

Thelen (2021) notes that the number of published studies on Public Relations has increased significantly, especially between 2016 and 2020. Although almost half of the authors were based in the United States, the published researchers came from 27 countries. Despite the growing number of publications on global PR, researchers have recognized the need to increase documentation of the practice in underrepresented regions of the world, such as Latin America (Molleda et al., 2017). As Jain and colleagues (2014) noted, Latin America is the least researched region in the world. Contextualized research, which refers to the study of PR in a specific country or region, contributes to a better understanding of how it is practiced in different cultures and places with different social, political and economic circumstances. In addition, Thelen (2021) points out that international public relations benefits from the methods used in the practice of the discipline in specific countries or regions such as the Anglo-Saxon, European or American regions, as well as the trends and challenges there. Therefore, there is a great need to further research and systematically document the profession in Latin America through comparative country-specific studies.

To date, there is no compendium of Public Relations research in Latin America that provides a comprehensive understanding of the studies that have focused on this region, which does not allow for an accurate understanding of its development in Latin America and the stage it is at.

The extensive research on Public Relations in the United States and Europe stands in stark contrast to the paucity of theoretical and empirical work on the field in the region. Among the reasons that explain the scarce research on the

practice of Public Relations, several authors agree that a crucial role in this field was played by the dictatorships and authoritarian regimes of the 20th century (Molleda et al., 2017). It was only after these began to fall, in the 1970s and 1980s, that public relations began to gain prominence (Mellado & Barría, 2012). Likewise, some researchers point to the close relationship between Public Relations and Journalism in Latin America, characterizing this practice as linked to information, unlike other consolidated fields (Mellado & Hanusch, 2011).

The consolidation of professions in the field of communication in Latin America has led to various specializations, including Public Relations and Organizational Communication (Krohling, 2011), a term that perhaps describes the role analyzed in this study more appropriately and with greater acceptance among professionals and academics. This term in itself differs from the European terms closest to the discipline, even in Spain, where the concept of Public Relations is understood and applied, but not as a professional role, but diluted in other more specific roles such as institutional relations, public affairs, protocol or the organization of events, which are incorporated into the field of corporate communication. The growth and interest of the public sector, business and society in Public Relations can be seen in the emergence of university degrees focused on this discipline in Latin America and the emergence of organizations that recognize the significant development of Public Relations in the field (Pradana, 2023), such as the Inter-American Confederation of Public Relations (CONFIARP) in 1960, which emerged from the transformation of the Inter-American Federation of Public Relations (FIARP), or, more recently, the Latin American Association of Public Relations (ALARP or ALARP International, a name used to distinguish the parent organization from the national affiliates), which was founded in Brazil in 1998 and currently has delegations in ten countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela). Likewise, there are international professional associations such as the historic Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA), which in 2020 recognized the need to concretize the vision of Public Relations in Latin America by creating the PRCA Americas division for the region. Other organizations such as the Spanish Association of Public Relations Researchers (AIRP) recognize the importance of Public Relations in Latin America. Although the consolidation of the profession in the region can be considered a fact due to public and business interest, could there be a specific vision or Latin American school of Public Relations? The study of this phenomenon from an academic-scientific point of view is scarce, especially in the region, especially if we limit ourselves to empirical research focused entirely on scientific knowledge, with other publications related to dissemination, from governments or professional organizations, or academic works (doctoral theses or others, such as dissertations).

However, there are enriching works on the subject that analyze the profession of Public Relations officer in Latin America, such as Molleda and Suárez (2003) and later Molleda and colleagues (2017), Álvarez-Nobell and colleagues (2022), Moss and colleagues (2017), Krohling (2011) or the literature reviews by Arzuaga Williams (2019) and Preciado-Hoyos (2013), among others.

State of the art

Theories on Public Relations are not as well developed as in other fields nearby, which could be due to several factors: first, that PR does not have as long a history as other fields; second, that it is far from having its components tested in different environments, such as in non-Western countries; third, that PR is characterized by a oscillation between marketing (and the generation of economic profit) and public interest (a social concern), and when the former predominates, PR increasingly overlaps with an extended version of marketing (Gezging, 2019).

This one-sided bias leads to the loss of PR's academic and social credibility. As a result, for-profit PR is associated with deception, misconduct, lies, scandals, corruption and other controversies. So when controversy arises in business or government, the PR department is tasked with cleaning up the mess. As a result, the population generally does not believe in PR because, as Johnston (2017) mentions, it is often perceived as an art of camouflage and deception. In Latin American regions, PR is believed to be successful only when the target audiences (those it seeks to influence) do not realize that they have become victims of its efforts. Therefore, to restore their trust and credibility in Latin America, more research and practice (Johnston, 2017) on Public Relations for the public good is needed, not to maximize the company's economic advantage, but to increase the public benefit.

The situation of mistrust in Latin American practice calls for a necessary distinction between mainstream PR studies and critical studies, analogous to the division in management research and psychosociology. According to Holladay and Coombs (2013), this can be used to distinguish between benign (authentic and ethical and for the benefit or wellbeing of the public/people) and malicious (unethical cases) examples of PR. In this sense, a critical examination of PR, according to these authors, is not only ethical but also challenges the epistemic, social and political assumptions of mainstream PR studies. It also recognizes the asymmetry of power between PR agencies and citizens, which makes the latter prey to PR tactics and strategies. Therefore, according to these authors, a new concept has been developed to address this vulnerability, namely PR literacy (Holladay & Coombs, 2013).

Similarly, four gaps identified to overcome the theoretical crisis are pointed out. First and foremost is the need to decolonize and decentralize the epistemic

foundations of Public Relations. As a discipline, PR needs to demonstrate more critical thinking, which also requires self-criticism of PR's role and function in maintaining the status quo. In turn, digital media, such as social media, should be incorporated into professional practice, as should the support of artificial intelligence (AI) in PR practice to update and automate the day-to-day activities of the profession (De San Eugenio et al., 2017).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural and socioeconomic differences in Public Relations in Latin America

Latin America and Europe have a number of cultural and socio-economic differences that can influence PR practices. The cultural diversity in Latin America, with its different nuances of language, traditions and values, may require tailored and sensitive communication approaches. The importance of community and family in Latin American culture may impact PR strategies that focus more on building long-term relationships (Moreno et al., 2022). Economic inequality in Latin America may also have an impact, as organizations may be more inclined to demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility to address social and economic issues in the region (Correa et al., 2004; Peinado-Vara, 2011).

Regarding the profession, role and values of Public Relations, several authors point out that the socioeconomic and political environment of Latin American countries such as Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela influence the practice of Public Relations (Lo et al., 2017). Other authors analyze the social roles and responsibilities assumed by professionals in Latin America and how the practice can be used to improve society (Preciado-Hoyos, 2013; Sommerfeldt, 2013). For example, with regard to the roles in the profession and the values of public Relations, the Academy analyzes the history of the practice in the region and the evolution of professionalization among its practitioners (Molleda et al., 2017), with one of the important themes being culture and civil society.

Historical development

The history of Public Relations in Latin America and Europe has been influenced by different political, economic and social contexts. In Europe, they have been more rooted in commercial and political traditions, while in Latin America the context has been more characterized by political changes, social struggles and democratic transitions. This may have led to PR approaches in the region being more focused on building trust and legitimacy. The role of PR professionals may have evolved to reflect regional specificities. PR professionals in the region could play a broader role, including crisis management, community partnership building and social responsibility engagement. This would move professional practice

from a unidirectional view of the job to creating bidirectional relationships (Fajardo & Nivia, 2016). The PR professional in Latin America could be seen as a bridge between organizations and communities due to their context, adapting communication strategies to local needs and values. In contrast, in Europe, where the institutional and cultural structure is different, the role of the Public Relations professional might be more focused on image management, corporate reputation and media relations.

Globalization and international tendencies

Although there are differences between public relations practices in Latin America and Europe, globalization has influenced the convergence of some strategies and approaches. The rapid spread of information and the introduction of communication technologies have led to the adoption of global practices on both continents. However, local adaptations and consideration of cultural sensitivities remain crucial.

In their study, Lee and colleagues (2023) identified four distinct groups of countries in terms of the number of global PR agencies per country. These are: top globalized countries, main globalized countries, globalizing countries and peripheral countries. The study also found that the degree of globalization of the PR agency sector in a country is related to its democracy factors, economic system (gross domestic product, GDP), foreign direct investment inflow, legal system (rule of law), cultural system (power distance and longevity) and media system (internet penetration rate).

Moreover, as commerce expands around the world, the main target groups that attract the attention of PR professionals are in countries such as Russia, China, India, Latin America and Europe. Practitioners in this field must overcome language barriers and social differences in order to conduct culturally appropriate and locally acceptable PR. Differences in lifestyles, customs, values and cultures are not the only challenges. The unique aspects of local political, economic and industrial structures also present complexities (Gottesman, 2019). However, technological advances and the Internet are fostering a sense of connectedness for PR professionals and providing access to new audiences.

Media and digital communication

Differences in media and technology penetration have a major impact on PR strategies. In Latin America, there is a greater fragmentation of media (Álvarez Ugarte, 2022; Guijarro, 2020) and unequal access to technology (Álvarez et al., 2021), which requires more diverse and adapted communication approaches. In Europe, where the technological infrastructure is more advanced, strategies focus on digital communication and the management of organizations' digital presence.

Authors such as Segura (2021) point out that the problems of public communication in Latin America, such as the concentration of traditional media systems, limited access to public information, attacks on press workers, among others, are now joined by the massive, networked and immediate dissemination of fake news, alternative facts, disinformation, hate speech, harassment through social networks and polarization.

Knowledge-producing institutions –such as science and journalism, which are based on the collection and analysis of objective and verifiable facts– are confronted with and coexist with anti-scientific discourses, alternative facts and false or misleading news (Waisbord, 2018). Likewise, reactionary discourses have continued to attack human rights in general and, specifically, those of the lower classes, women, sexual dissenters and victims of genocides such as dictatorships and civil wars (Waisboard & Armando, 2017).

The challenges for communication in Latin America are manifold, especially in relation to institutions. Based on Habermas' (1999) theory of validity claims and the normative foundations of public dialog, Segura (2021) considers that threats to democratic communication can be categorized into three groups: threats that challenge the notion of truth, which is based on empirical evidence and logical argumentation and underpins science and journalism; challenges that go against the normative consensus on Human Rights and democracy, and reactionary criticism of discourses that recognize rights and criticize forms of stigmatization –so-called political correctness– that represent a moment of crisis in democratic communication without clear solutions.

Interdisciplinary collaboration

Public Relations practice in Latin America may be more open to interdisciplinary collaboration as it has to deal with complex and evolving challenges. In contrast, collaboration may be more limited in the Anglo-Saxon world, where institutional structures may be more rigid.

Although Latin America has a long history of academic development and well-established PR professionals, many North American and European conceptualizations and trends continue to predominate in theoretical debates and professional practice. However, a series of international studies sponsored by EUPRERA and a broad network of researchers, universities and local professional organizations has become a fundamental precedent for the consolidation of the profession in the region and its global visibility. The results of this study reveal the strategic issues and the main professional trends in public Relations, which are divided into management trends, strategic issues, the impact of fake news, information for decision-making and professionalization. The third area includes

professional development and organization of the activity, communication departments, gender, work climate and stress, job satisfaction and professional commitment (Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022).

Such a categorization allows not only the representation of the issues addressed in the third edition of the Latin American Communication Monitor (Moreno et al., 2019), but also an analysis of the status quo of the non-adjunct profession, as it shows the self-perception of the category. It therefore allows a reflection on improvements, especially in terms of professional training and the institutionalization of professional training in Latin America. Therefore, the impact of the results and the conduct of studies such as this one are extremely important for the development of the profession: their analysis, compared to the state of affairs in other regions and an explanatory self-understanding of the path traveled and the path ahead, scientifically determines the levels of perception and their representativeness in Latin America, which is tantamount to a sign of maturity and development of the profession and its study (Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022).

Strategic planning, relationship management, reputation and the strategic use of digital media also received high approval rates in terms of their importance. Practitioners' references to the importance of digital media are consistent with the findings of Álvarez-Nobell and colleagues (2022), who indicate that the most important strategic issues for communicators in Latin America concern digital development and social media. These findings are also consistent with recent studies that have noted the role of strategic internal communication in fostering a positive organizational culture (Men & Yue, 2019), managing organizational crises, navigating the corporate digital environment (Yue et al., 2021), and ultimately consolidating positive organization-public relations and organizational reputation (Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022).

Challenges and opportunities

The challenges facing the profession are manifold and could be aimed at adapting to changing contexts, building trust in an environment of misinformation and managing crises in unstable political and economic situations. Opportunities could arise from the rich cultural diversity, the ability to work in challenging scenarios and the possibility to innovate communication strategies.

North American and European conceptualizations have strongly dominated PR theory and practice on a global level. Structural limitations (language and access to the main centers of knowledge) have prevented the recognition of the Latin American school of thought in this field. Thus, the main academic conferences of the discipline take place in the global North, while the vast majority of the most important journals are published in the global area, in the United States or

in Europe, and Latin American authors or topics from other regions are hardly represented. In turn, few studies focus on theoretical developments in the Latin American region, further contributing to the fact that Latin American perspectives in the discipline are at worst absent or at best marginalized (Molleda et al., 2017).

Although it is positive that recent studies such as that of Thelen (2021) show that since 2010 –and especially since 2016– a healthy number of journal articles have appeared in English with a focus on the region, or initiatives that include Spanish as an accepted language for presentations at major communication conferences, the truth is that Latin American research with global academic impact is still scarce (Labarca & Sadi, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

A bibliographic review was carried out in scientific-academic research databases, using terms containing (Public Relations AND Latin America) and other abbreviations such as PR or Latam. Articles from the last ten years, including 2023, were selected, as well as other older articles that should be included for their contribution to clarifying whether or not there is a Latin American public relations current. However, the sparse scholarly production in Scopus and Web of Science on this topic prompted us to increase searches in other databases and search engines (figure 1) and to support the review with articles from other sources that responded to this search and objective via Redalyc and Researchgate. In turn, exclusion criteria were applied, excluding research papers originating from bachelor or master theses, articles or research papers with no methodology, opinion articles or research papers with generic or non-deterministic conclusions.

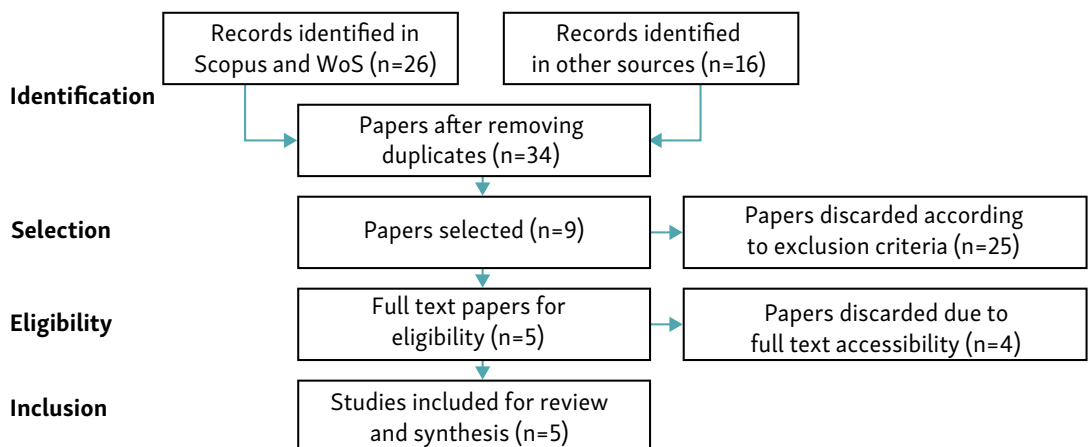


Figure 1. Workflow for the literature review

Source: Own elaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A literature search was conducted following the guidelines presented in the methodological presentation. A summary table of the works and research of the authors selected for the study is presented on next page.

The contributions of each author were analyzed for each of the variables and their relationship to the aim of the study, which is to understand the differences between PR in Latin America and other countries. Table 1 shows the variables abstracted from the review: the role of the PR professional and PR in Latin America, the new role of the PR consultant in Latin America, the role of Colombian PR professionals in defining the communication process in public institutions, the influence of PR on national identity and unity, and PR from a Western perspective.

Arzuaga-Williams (2019), who studies the role of PR professional and public relations in Latin America, both organizationally and in the relationships themselves, highlights three schools of thought in her research related to the study of the political and social functions of the profession, its contribution to development and social change, and research within a strategic vision of the profession that paves the way for the existence of a strong influence of the social environment (Arzuaga-Williams, 2019) in the professional practice of Public Relations in Latin America, establishing a differentiated vision of the role of the public relations practitioner compared to that of other regions.

Bonilla (2013), examining the evolution of public relations, highlights a new role of the public relations professional, in which managing and protection of corporate credibility has become the main task of Public Relations professionals in Latin America. This adapted professional profile increases their strategic value for companies, acting as a radar and transmitter of valuable information for the company and helping to align public relations policies with the company's objectives (Bonilla, 2013).

In an approach to the study of the professional profile in Colombia (Molleda & Suarez, 2003), they define professionals as creators of awareness about the country's reality, which requires an active role on the part of all types of organizations. In this study, the authors identify four dimensions of the role of Public Relations professionals in Colombia: ethics and social responsibility, employee wellbeing, community wellbeing and harmony with the government. In addition, they highlight that professionals who occupy the dimensions of community well-being and harmony with the government in organizations are more inclined to also lead activities related to ethics and social responsibility within the organization (Molleda & Suarez, 2003).

Author and year	Title of the paper	Goal	Variable	Definition	Contribution to the study
Arzuaga Williams (2019)	Latin American perspectives on the role of professionals in organizational communication and public relations.	To present the evidence for the consolidation of the profession in Latin America and to propose a review of the empirical research published in scientific bases on the role of Organizational Communication and Public Relations professional in the region.	The role of the Public Relations professional and Public Relations in Latin America.	Prevalence of terms for Organizational Communication and Public Relations.	The findings highlight three schools of thought, especially in empirical studies that focus on research into the political and social functions of the profession, the profession's contribution to societal development and change, and research within a strategic vision of the profession. The study concludes that the social environment has an influence on the professional practice of Public Relations in Latin America.
Bonilla (2013)	Evolución de las relaciones públicas en los últimos 25 años.	Establish the new role of the PR consultant in organizations.	The new role of the PR consultant in organizations.	Managing and protecting corporate credibility has become the fundamental task of public relations professionals.	The new role of the Public Relations consultant in organizations enhances their strategic value by influencing aspects such as the timely transmission of information, the alignment of perception-building elements with the organization's objectives, communication regulations, the integral management of the organization's communication and the management of sustainability projects.
Molleda and Suarez (2003)	El papel de los profesionales colombianos de relaciones públicas como agentes de transformación social: cómo la crisis del país obliga a los profesionales, a ir más allá de la comunicación con los públicos organizacionales.	To summarize the results of a qualitative and quantitative research project conducted in Colombia between July and December 2002 on the role of Colombian Public Relations professionals.	The role of Colombian Public Relations professionals.	They define themselves as creators of awareness of the Colombian reality, which requires an active role for all types of organizations.	Four dimensions of the social role of Public Relations professionals in Colombia were mentioned: ethics and social responsibility, employee wellbeing, community wellbeing, and harmony with the government. Those who work in the latter two areas are more likely to also perform activities in the areas of ethics and social responsibility.

Table 1 - Continues ▶

<p>Fernández-Souto (2006)</p>	<p>Las relaciones públicas como elemento tangencial entre la publicidad, propaganda, información y otras áreas de la comunicación.</p>	<p>Analyze the definition of the communicative process in public institutions, delving into the various forms of communication that are often confusing to identify.</p>	<p>Definition of the communication process in public institutions.</p>	<p>The author argues that it begins with a political discourse that, on many occasions, leaves aside the informative purpose of the administration with respect to its citizens and becomes directly linked to propaganda and the space of public relations at the service of politics.</p>	<p>The results suggest that the links between the three forms of communication - information, propaganda and advertising - merge into a single entity when talking about Public Relations and especially when it comes to the use of techniques and strategies applied in the field of political communication.</p>
<p>De San Eugenio and colleagues (2017)</p>	<p>Catalonia's public diplomacy and media relations strategy: A case study of the Eugeni Xammar Programme of International Communication and Public Relations.</p>	<p>Determining the extent to which Public Relations can influence the attribution of meaning to the concepts of national identity and unity.</p>	<p>Influence of Public Relations on national identity and unity.</p>	<p>It refers to four gaps identified by the authors as a way out of the theoretical crisis.</p>	<p>Academics in the field of Public Relations must have strong skills in data collection, interpretation and reporting.</p>

Table 1. Contribution of the authors analyzed

Source: Own elaboration based on the referenced authors.

Fernández-Souto (2006), who defines the communication process in public institutions, on the other hand, argues that it begins with a political discourse that leaves aside the informative purpose of the administration towards the public and becomes intertwined with propaganda and the space of public relations in the service of politics. The research highlights the fact that information, propaganda and advertising are intertwined in public relations. Fernández-Souto (2006) stresses that this has a special significance in political communication.

Finally, De San Eugenio et. al (2017) identify an influence of Public Relations on identity and national unity and highlight this area as fundamental to the process of national construction in the context of socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic differences.

CONCLUSIONS

The descriptive analysis of the differences and similarities between Public Relations practices in Latin America and other European, American or Anglo-Saxon visions sheds light on how this region has developed unique approaches in the field, sufficiently differentiated to consider the existence of a Latin American strand or current of Public Relations. The figure of the public relations practitioner in Latin America emerges as a crucial actor, adapting and responding to regional specificities, which underpins the idea of a specific public Relations current in the Latin American region. In the context of the region, the professional figure of the public relations practitioner is built as a bridge between organizations and communities, in a constant effort to unite the corporate and institutional communication of organizations with the needs of local communities, their essence, culture and values. This Latin American vision differs from that in other regions, where the local community, local culture and socio-organizational values are not felt in professional practice, where the activity is mainly focused on corporate image, corporate reputation or press management and media relations, as is the case in Europe.

The research highlights the importance of considering cultural and contextual diversity in the practice of public relations in Latin America as a uniquely differentiating and distinctive aspect, which Arzuaga Williams (2019) recognizes as "the influence of the social system on the practice of the profession" (p. 148).

Although Latin America has a long history of academic development and well-established PR practitioners, North American and European conceptualizations and trends continue to predominate in theoretical debates and professional practice. However, there are already international studies –such as that of EUPRERA– and

a broad network of researchers, universities and local professional associations that have become a fundamental precedent to consolidate the profession in the Latin American region and make it visible at a global level.

The negative public image associated with PR can be counterbalanced by critical research, in contrast to the prevailing research in the field, which does not question the intentionality, authenticity, sincerity, broader context, power dynamics, and social and political implications of PR practices. Research and practice in non-Western contexts show the need for intercultural, cultural and multicultural PR as emerging subfields of the PR fields. However, there is still a lack of regionally focused studies on the role of this profession and its impact on organizational goals or the PR practitioner's own performance, which could open up new lines of research. Also unknown is the state of the profession in the region in terms of digitalization and the support of new technologies for daily work.

A major challenge for PR remains the question of how to respond to conflicts between consumers, workers, citizens, genders and the environment instigated by the very companies or governments that PR is supposed to defend, promote and sometimes even whitewash. The networked space is changing the way PR professionals interact in a dynamic communications environment. Today, there are already spaces to support communities of practice. Their main aim is not only to add value to professional discussions, but also to inform all practitioners of differing opinions by providing a common platform for the exchange of ideas.

The most important task in Public Relations in Latin America today is to bridge the gap between theory and practice through the convergence of educational and professional environments, through training that goes beyond the theory of communication and Public Relations, helping to provide knowledge and skills for understanding and interpreting the factors of development of the economy and its dynamics, political and sociological science for the understanding of institutions and citizens through cultural and social values, in addition to business, understanding and contributing to the strategic objectives of organizations (Moss et al., 2017). There is a need not only for fundamental changes in the structure of the educational process itself, but also for greater interaction between universities, industry and experts in educational, scientific, and applied problem solving in the field.

REFERENCES

- Álvarez-Nobell, A., Molleda, J. C., & Silveira Athaydes, A. (2022). Strategic topics and main professional trends in public relations: Results from 19 Latin American countries. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 11(2), 171-197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X221081178>
- Álvarez, I., Quirós, C., Marín, R., Medina, L. & Biurrun, A. (2021). *Desigualdad digital en Iberoamérica. Retos en una sociedad conectada* (Digital inequality in Latin America. Challenges in a connected society). Fundación Carolina. <https://doi.org/10.33960/issn-e.1885-9119.DT50>
- Álvarez Ugarte, R. (2022). *Viabilidad mediática en América Latina: hacia un periodismo sustentable* (Media viability in Latin America: towards sustainable journalism). Centro de Estudios en Libertad de Expresión y Acceso a la Información (CELE). <http://hdl.handle.net/10226/2389>
- Arzuaga Williams, M. (2019). Latin American perspectives on the role of professionals in organizational communication and public relations. *Anagramas Rumbos y Sentidos de la Comunicación*, 17(34), 135-154. <https://doi.org/10.22395/angr.v17n34a7>
- Gezging, U. B. (2019). Critical public relations and cultural public relations: two theoretical exits before the bridge for the lopsided, practice-focused public relations. *Global Media Journal: Turkish Edition*, 9(18), 1-23. <https://globalmediajournaltr.yeditepe.edu.tr/en/spring-2019-issue>
- Binatti, G., Batalha, Y., Castro, J. d., & Oliveira, M. H. d. S. (2022). Latin american bike sharing ecosystem overview: from data collection to implementation model portraits. *Urbe. Revista Brasileira De Gestão Urbana*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-3369.014.e20210066>
- Bonilla, C. (2013). Evolución de las relaciones públicas en los últimos 25 años (Evolution of Public Relations in the past 25 years). *Razón y Palabra*, (83), 89-100. <https://www.revistarazonypalabra.org/index.php/ryp/article/view/511>
- Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe. (2018). *Estudio Económico de América Latina y el Caribe 2018. Evolución de la inversión en América Latina y el Caribe: hechos estilizados, determinantes y desafíos de política* (Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean 2018. Investment developments in Latin America and the Caribbean: stylized facts, determinants and policy challenges). <https://hdl.handle.net/11362/43964>
- Correa, M. E., Flynn, S. & Amit, A. (2004). *Responsabilidad social corporativa en América Latina: una visión empresarial* (Corporate social responsibility in Latin America: a business vision). CEPAL. <https://hdl.handle.net/11362/5621>
- De San Eugenio, J., Ginesta, X. & Xifra, J. (2017). Catalonia's public diplomacy and media relations strategy: A case study of the Eugeni Xammar Programme of International Communication and Public Relations. In I. Somerville, O. Hargie, M. Taylor & M. Toledano (Eds.), *International Public Relations: Perspectives from Deeply Divided Societies* (pp.113-130). Routledge.
- Fajardo, G. C & Nivia, A. M. (2016). *Relaciones públicas y comunicación organizacional. Ejes de la comunicación "Guía de conceptos y saberes"* (Public relations and organizational communication. Axes of communication "Guide of concepts and knowledge"). Editorial Tadeo Lozano.
- Fernández-Souto, A. B. (2006). Las relaciones públicas como elemento tangencial entre la publicidad, propaganda, información y otras áreas de la comunicación (Public relations as a tangential element between advertising, publicity, information and other areas of communication). *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, 48(196), 159-170. <https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2006.196.42518>

- Guijarro Piedra, M. (2020). La polarización mediática en Latinoamérica: Caso Ecuador (2007-2017). *#PerDebate*, 4(1), 66–85. <https://doi.org/10.18272/pd.v4i1.1870>
- Gottesman, B. (2019, June 25). Globalization & Public Relations. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/brian-gottesman/globalization-public-relations-dc85c53ecf51>
- Habermas, J. (1999). *Teoría de la acción comunicativa (I), racionalidad de la acción y racionalización social (Theory of communicative action (I), rationality of action and social rationalization)*. Taurus.
- Holladay, S. J. & Coombs, W. T. (2013). Public relations literacy: Developing critical consumers of public relations. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 2(2), 125-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X13483673>
- Johnston, J. (2017). The public interest: A new way of thinking for public relations? *Public Relations Inquiry*, 6(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X16644006>
- Krohling Kunsch, M. M. (2011). Comunicação Organizacional e Relações Públicas: Perspectivas dos estudos Latino-Americanos (Organizational Communication and Public Relations: Prospects for Latin American studies). *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 1(1(ene-jun)), 69–96. [https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v1i1\(ene-jun\).4](https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v1i1(ene-jun).4)
- Labarca, C. & Sadi, G. (2022). Some reflections left over from the work of editing a special issue on public relations in Latin America. *Public Relations Inquiry* 2022, 11(2) 167–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X221082232>
- Lee, S., Chung, S., & Lee, E. (2023). Globalization of the public relations agency industry: a country-level analysis of global public relations agencies and environmental factors. *Journal of Communication Management*, 27(1), 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-06-2022-0067>
- Lo, K. D., Waters, R. D., & Christensen, N. (2017). Assessing the applicability of Hofstede's cultural dimensions for Global 500 corporations' Facebook profiles and content. *Journal of Communication Management*, 21(1), 51-67. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-04-2016-0021>
- Mellado, C. & Barría, S. (2012). Development of professional roles in the practice of public relations in Chile. *Public Relations Review*, 38(3), 446-453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.04.001>
- Mellado, C. & Hanusch, F. (2011). Comparing professional identities, attitudes, and views in public communication: a study of Chilean journalists and public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, 37(4), 384-391. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.08.014>
- Men, L. R. & Yue, C. A. (2019). Creating a positive emotional culture: Effect of internal communication and impact on employee supportive behaviors. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), 101764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.03.001>
- Molleda, J. C. & Suarez, A. M. (2003). El papel de los profesionales colombianos de relaciones públicas como agentes de transformación social: cómo la crisis del país obliga a los profesionales, a ir más allá de la comunicación con los públicos organizacionales (The role of Colombian public relations professionals as agents of social transformation: how the country's crisis forces professionals to go beyond communication with organisational audiences). *Anagramas Rumbos y Sentidos de la Comunicación*, 2(3), 86-134. <https://revistas.udem.edu.co/index.php/anagramas/article/view/1244>

- Molleda, J. C., Moreno, Á., & Navarro, C. (2018). Professionalization of public relations in Latin America: A longitudinal comparative study. *Public Relations Review*, 43(5), 1084-1093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.08.003>
- Moreno, A., Molleda, J. C., Álvarez Nobell, A. Herrera, M., Athaydes, A. & Suárez, A. M. (2019). *Comunicación estratégica y sus retos: fake news, confianza, información para la toma de decisiones, liderazgo y compromiso laboral. Resultados de una encuesta en 19 países* (Strategic communication and its challenges: fake news, trust, information for decision making, leadership and work commitment. Results of a survey in 19 countries). EUPRERA/Dircom.
- Moreno, Á., Navarro, C., & Fuentes-Lara, C. (2022). Factors affecting turnover intentions among millennial public relations professionals: the latin american case. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 11(2), 199-220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147x221081176>
- Moss, D., Likely, F., Sriramesh, K., & Ferrari, M. A. (2017). Structure of the public relations/communication department: Key findings from a global study. *Public Relations Review*, 43(1), 80-90.
- Norén, F. (2019). H-Day 1967 – An alternative perspective on “propaganda” in the historiography of public relation. *Public Relations Review*, 45(2), 236-245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.10.004>
- Peinado-Vara, E. (2011). RSE en América Latina. In A. Vives & E. Peinado-Vara (Eds.), *La responsabilidad social corporativa de la empresa en América Latina* (The corporate social responsibility of the company in Latin America) (pp. 65-83). Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Pradana, F. J. (2023). *Comunicación institucional de la diplomacia pública: los gabinetes de comunicación de las embajadas de España en el exterior* (Institutional communication of public diplomacy: the communication offices of the Spanish embassies abroad). McGraw-Hill.
- Preciado-Hoyos, A. (2013). The role of public relations in corporate social responsibility programs in the Colombian electricity sector. *Public Relations Review*, 39(5), 591-593. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.004>
- Segura, M. S. (2021). Public communication in Latin America: Obstacles and overcoming experiences. *WAC Global*. <https://waccglobal.org/public-communication-in-latin-america-obstacles-and-overcoming-experiences/>
- Sommerfeldt, E. J. (2013). Networks of social capital: Extending a public relations model of civil society in Peru. *Public Relations Review*, 39(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.08.005>
- Thelen, P. D. (2021). The status of public relations research addressing Latin America: A content analysis of published articles from 1980 to 2020, *Public Relations Review*, 47(4), 102079. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102079>
- Waisbord, S. & Amado, A. (2017). Populist communication by digital means: presidential Twitter in Latin America. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20:9, 1330-1346, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328521>
- Waisbord, S. (2018). Truth is what happens to news: On journalism, fake news, and post-truth. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 1866-1878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1492881>

Yue, A. (2021). Navigating change in the era of COVID-19: The role of top leaders' charismatic rhetoric and employees' organizational identification. *Public Relations Review*, 47(5), 102118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102118>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FRANCISCO-JOSÉ PRADANA, graduate in Advertising Communication and in Protocol and Event Management, master in Communication Management (URJC) and Ph.D. candidate in Communication (UVigo). Lecturer in the department of Communication Studies and postgraduate director at Universidad Europea de Madrid. His research interests focus on organizational communication and public institutions. He is a member of the Communication, Society and Organizations (IMPACTA) research group at Faculty of Economics, Business and Communication Sciences at UEM.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2323-1509>