REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE STATE ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH

Relevance of the Research Topic and the Degree of Its Scholarly Elaboration. Public relations (PR) is a communication mechanism concerned with managing and maintaining the relationship between an organization and its surrounding environment. As a managerial mechanism, PR originated in Western countries, particularly in the United States. Public relations constitutes an important component of the system of public administration and is of particular relevance to contemporary political science. This relevance is determined by a number of factors:

- Legitimacy and public support of state institutions: interaction with the public helps strengthen the legitimacy of state institutions and secure public support, while also increasing citizens' trust in the government.

- Enhancing transparency and openness: public relations contributes to increasing transparency and openness within state institutions. Regular information activities, public consultations, and reporting enable citizens and organizations to remain informed about state activities, as well as to monitor and assess its actions.

- Consideration of diverse interests and needs: public relations makes it possible to take into account a variety of views and proposals in the formulation and implementation of public policy, which in turn leads to more balanced and effective decision-making.

- Proactive problem-solving and conflict prevention: regular interaction with the public helps identify problems within public administration. This makes it possible to take measures aimed at resolving conflicts in society or preventing them from arising in the first place.

- Increasing the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts: the public relations system can serve as an instrument in combating corruption. Citizen participation in decision-making processes, along with opportunities to express opinions and proposals, contributes to greater transparency and helps prevent the abuse of official authority.

The foregoing confirms that studying the role of public relations in public administration contributes to expanding the

research domain of political science and underscores the necessity of investigating this issue.

At a time when considerable attention is being devoted within political science to the study of PR models in public administration, the examination of the Azerbaijani model in this field acquires particular importance and relevance, while also creating broader opportunities for comparative political research.

In Azerbaijan, examples of these developments include the establishment of the e-government institution as a result of the introduction of information and communication technologies into the system of public administration; the implementation of the public–private partnership mechanism as an outcome of managerial modernization processes; and, as a consequence of democratic advancement, increased transparency, the involvement of civil society institutions in the governance process, and the implementation of open government initiatives. The formation of a system of relations between society and the state has become an important element of political modernization, while the need to respond more rapidly to societal demands, along with a number of other factors, has made it necessary to reconsider the content of the instruments used to coordinate interaction between the two sides. As a result, the study of public relations as a coordinating mechanism and institution linking society and the state has acquired particular relevance.

One of the earliest scholars in the field of public relations was Scott Black. He examined the origins of PR in the United States and the factors that conditioned its development as a profession. Black argued that PR is the art of studying public opinion, influencing it through specific aims and methods, and achieving harmony on the basis of truth and full information.[1]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the researchers of public relations in the United States was Ivy Lee.[2] He

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[1] Блэк, С. «Паблик рилейшнз. Что это такое» / С.Блэк. – Москва: Модино пресс, – 1989. – 240 с.

[2] Li, Y. China's Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination / Y.Li. – 2nd Edition. – London: Routledge, – 2021. – pp. 26-29.

regarded public relations as an independent phenomenon and sought to explain it through the communicative activity of governing actors. Ivy Lee and Scott Black are considered among the earliest pioneers in the study of public relations within American sociology. In subsequent years, this phenomenon began to be studied not only in the United States, but also in Western European countries, particularly in the United Kingdom and Germany. In this field, the works of T.Bivins, S.Cutlip, and D.L.Hoffman stand out. These scholars primarily approached the problem of public relations in a general and theoretical manner[3].

Since the 1990s, public relations has increasingly been studied as a communicative mechanism of public administration. In the initial period, research in this area was conducted primarily in the United States and Western Europe. The transformation of public relations into a mechanism of public administration from the 1990s onward was associated with the growing interest in methods of political governance and political communication applied in Western countries, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. The American political scientist C. Gordon, who examined the use of public relations within the system of public administration, interpreted public relations in public administration as a set of measures undertaken by the state to secure public support in the process of managerial decision-making.

Western experts such as D.Roor, S.Cutlip, T.Kelleher, S.Bowen, B.Rawlins, T.Manning, R.Smith, and M.Turney, who have examined the specific features of implementing the public relations mechanism within the system of public administration, view public relations as a mechanism of governance and a form of communicative activity, while advocating that public relations in public administration should

[3] Bivins, T. Mixed Media: Moral Distinctions in Journalism, Advertising, and Public Relations / T.Bivins. – 3rd Edition – London: Routledge, – 2023. – 242 p.; Cutlip, S. The Unseen Power: Public Relations: A History, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates / S.Cutlip. – New York: Routledge, – 1994. – 830 p.; Hoffmann, D.L. The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia / D.L.Hoffmann. – London: Routledge, – 2023. – 386 p.

be insulated from economic interests. These scholars explore various aspects of public relations in the system of public administration[4].

For example, S.Cutlip classifies the purposes of using public relations in public administration. The German specialist T. Kelleher regards public relations as a mechanism of political communication and explains the use of this mechanism as a rejection of coercive methods and as an expression of the intention to build partnership with society. In this context, he emphasizes the maturity of civil society institutions and the democratic nature of the state. The specific features of using the public relations mechanism in public administration, as well as the functional grounds for its implementation, have also been examined by G.Bowen, B.Rawlins, and T.Martin.

Unlike his predecessors, R.Smith sought to examine public relations in public administration within an institutional framework. He pointed to the need for specialized bodies within the state structure to perform this function. R.Smith also provided a classification of the tasks to be carried out by these bodies[5].

The specific features of using the public relations mechanism in public administration are studied not only in the West, but also in the countries of the former USSR. In Russia, in particular, a considerable body of research has been devoted to this subject. Specialists such as A.Markov, V.Komarovsky, A.Belova, S.Varakuta, and A.Chumikov examine various aspects of public relations as a mechanism of public administration as a whole, including its nature, structure, functions, and purposes of use [6].

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[4] Kelleher, T. Public Relations / T.Kelleher. – 1st Edition. – New York: Oxford University Press, – 2018.; Manning, M.J. Historical Dictionary of American Propaganda / M.J.Manning. – London: Routledge, – 2004. – 448 p.; Smith, R.D. Strategic Planning for Public Relations / R.D.Smith. – London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, – 2005. – 403 p.; Turney, M. “Government Public Relations” // – Northern Kentucky University: Online Readings in Public Relations.

[5] Smith, R.D. Strategic Planning for Public Relations / R.D.Smith. – London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, – 2005. – 403 p.

[6] Марков, А.А. Теория и практика связей с общественностью. Учебное пособие / А.А.Марков. – Санкт-Петербург: Санкт-Петербургский государственный инженерно-экономический университет, – 2011. – 175 с.;

The problem under consideration has also been examined from various perspectives by Azerbaijani specialists. Among Azerbaijani scholars, A.Abbasov, M.Bayramov, C.Jabbarov, V.Alibayov, M.Hasanov, A.Israilzadeh, A.Amaşov, I.Huseynov, S.Amirkhanov, U.Imamaliyeva, V.Ismayılov, B.Karimov, O.Mammədov, R.Ismayılov, U.Orucov, and others have investigated the theoretical and methodological aspects of the problem, as well as the current state of public relations in Azerbaijan[7].

In his article "The Organization and Management of Public Relations in State Bodies," M.Hasanov analyzes the essence and historical emergence of public relations as a phenomenon of the twentieth century, and, drawing on the examples of the United States, Italy, and France, examines the objectives and main directions of the state's public relations activities[8].

U.Imamaliyeva examines public relations as a specific type of political technology. In her article devoted to this issue, she analyzes the principal features of PR in this context, as well as its role as a form of managerial activity aimed at establishing favorable relations

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Комаровский, В.С. Государственная Служба и СМИ / В.С.Комаровский. – Воронеж: Издательство ВГУ, – 2003. – 114 с.

[7] Abbasov, Ə. İnsan haqları və ictimai rəy. – Bakı: Təknur, – 2013. – 218 s.; Həsənov, M. Dövlət orqanlarında ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələrin təşkili və idarə olunması / M.Həsənov, F.Tağızadə // Geostrategiya jurnalı, – Bakı: – 2019. № 04 (52), – s.21-25.; İsrailzadə, Ə. Təşkilat və qurumlarda ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələrin fəaliyyətinin əhəmiyyəti // Azərbaycan Aqrar Elmi, – 2019. №3, – s.144-145.; Hüseynov, İ. İctimaiyyətlə əlaqələr. Ali məktəblər üçün dərslik / İ.Hüseynov, S.Əmirxanov. – Bakı: – 2017. – 478 s.; Karimov, B. Haydar Aliyev döneminde Azerbaycan Cumhuriyetinin dış politikası (1993-2003) / B.Karimov. – İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, – 2007. – 149 s.; Amaşov, Ə.M. Pablik rileyşnz: ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələr / Ə.Amaşov, M.Osmanoğlu, N.Əhmədli. – Bakı: "PS" MMC, – 2001. – 245 s.; İsrailzadə, Ə. Təşkilat və qurumlarda ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələrin fəaliyyətinin əhəmiyyəti // Azərbaycan Aqrar Elmi, – 2019. №3, – s.144-145.; Əlibəyov, V.N. İctimaiyyətlə əlaqələr. Bələdiyyələr üçün / V.N.Əlibəyov. – Bakı: – 2004, – 144 s.; İsmayılov, R. İctimaiyyətlə əlaqələr: Bütün yollar KİV-dən keçir/ R.İsmayılov. – Bakı: "Yeni nəsil", – 2001. – 168 s.; Orucov, Ü. İctimaiyyətlə əlaqələr strategiyasında psixologiya faktoru // 525-ci qəzet. – 2022, 6 dekabr. – s.13 və b.

[8] Həsənov, M. Dövlət orqanlarında ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələrin təşkili və idarə olunması / M.Həsənov, F.Tağızadə // – Bakı: Geostrategiya jurnalı,– 2019. № 04 (52), – s.21-25.

with the audience, and identifies the factors that ensure its effectiveness as an instrument of persuasion[9].

Thus, an analysis of the scholarly literature on the problem demonstrates that various aspects of the research topic have been examined by scholars in Azerbaijan and abroad. However, the issue of public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan has not yet been studied in a systematic manner, either by Azerbaijani scholars or by researchers in foreign countries.

Object and Subject of the Research. The object of the research is the problem of public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan, while the subject of the research comprises the role of public relations in the system of public governance, the specific features of their implementation, and the mechanisms involved in this sphere.

Aim and Objectives of the Research. The aim of the research is to elucidate the role and mechanism of public relations within the system of public administration in the Republic of Azerbaijan, to examine the specific features of its implementation, and to explore its development prospects.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- to conduct a methodological analysis of the essence of the concept of public relations, its structure and functions, including the specific features of the implementation of the public relations mechanism within the system of public administration;
- to identify the principal functions of applying the public relations mechanism in public administration;
- to analyze the specific features of the application of the public relations mechanism within the systems of public administration in different countries of the world;
- to reveal the political and communicative significance of public relations in the Republic of Azerbaijan and to characterize its distinctive features;
- to examine the legal aspects of the application of public relations in the system of public administration in Azerbaijan at the present stage;

[9] İmaməliyeva, Ü. İctimaiyyətlə əlaqələr siyasi texnologiyaların bir növü kimi // – Bakı: Bakı Universitetinin xəbərləri, Sosial siyasi elmlər, – 2021. №3, – s.21-27.

- to investigate the specific features and development trends in the application of the public relations mechanism within the system of public administration.

Research Methods. In conducting the research, general logical methods such as analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction were employed, along with the methods of systemic analysis, expert evaluation, and comparative political analysis.

Main Provisions Submitted for Defense. The research has advanced the following principal propositions:

- Public relations functions as an important mechanism of political communication within the system of public administration.

- The application of public relations is a characteristic feature of states governed by democratic regimes.

- In the Republic of Azerbaijan, the implementation of public relations in public administration plays a decisive role in shaping public perception, promoting national identity, and fostering effective communication between the government and citizens.

- The establishment of public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan is grounded in a specific legal framework and constitutes one of the important factors underpinning the country's enduring socio-political stability.

- In Azerbaijan, the activities of ASAN Service, DOST centers, and the development of other digital platforms in public administration contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of public relations.

Scientific Novelty of the Research. The scientific novelty of the study is determined, above all, by the way the research problem has been formulated, and it is reflected in the following theses:

- The concepts and approaches advanced with regard to the essence of public relations have been generalized, and the specific features of applying this mechanism within the system of public administration have been identified.

- For the first time in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the specific features of the implementation of public relations within the system of public administration have been examined and studied as a function of the state.

- The legal aspects of public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan have been analyzed, and the prospects for establishing a unified legal framework for this mechanism in the future have been considered.

- In Azerbaijan, public relations has been examined as a constituent element of the modernization of public administration, and the mechanisms of its implementation in this context have been investigated.

- Azerbaijan's positive experience in the use of digital communication channels between state bodies and citizens, as well as electronic platforms such as ASAN Service and DOST centers, has been highlighted and substantiated.

Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research. The propositions advanced and the findings obtained in the course of this study may serve as a foundation for future scholarly research on the role of public relations in public administration. The theoretical and methodological section of the dissertation is rich in valuable material both for academic research and for teaching in higher education institutions in this field.

From a practical perspective, the dissertation includes research on the areas of activity of DOST centers and offers valuable recommendations for state bodies. In this regard, it would be useful to take into account certain proposals advanced concerning the activities of DOST centers in connection with the restoration of social infrastructure facilities in the territories liberated from occupation during the post-war period.

The materials of the dissertation may also be used in teaching relevant courses at higher education institutions, in the preparation of lectures and teaching manuals, and in the organization of scholarly and practical conferences devoted to the problem under study.

Approbation and Implementation. The principal provisions of the dissertation have been reflected in articles and conference theses published in scholarly journals of various universities in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as in collected volumes issued in foreign countries.

Name of the organization where the dissertation work was performed. Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The total volume of the dissertation in characters, indicating the volume of the structural sections of the dissertation separately. The dissertation consists of an introduction, 2 chapters, a conclusion and a list of used literature. The introduction of the dissertation is 11 pages – 20001 characters, Chapter I is 53 pages – 98703 characters, Chapter II is 48 pages – 91110 characters, Conclusion is 4 pages – 6407 characters. The total volume of the dissertation, excluding the list of used literature, is 216226 characters.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH

The Introduction to the dissertation substantiates the relevance of the topic and the degree to which it has been studied, defines the object and subject of the research, its aim and objectives, methods, and the main propositions submitted for defense, and provides information on the scientific novelty of the study, its theoretical and practical significance, its approbation and implementation, the name of the institution where the dissertation was carried out, as well as the separate volume of its structural sections and the total volume measured in characters.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entitled **"The Essence and Application Features of Public Relations Mechanisms in the System of Public Administration".** The chapter consists of three subsections and is generally devoted to the theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem.

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The first subsection of the chapter is entitled "The Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Study of Public Relations". This subsection attempts, in general terms, to clarify the essence of public

relations. In this connection, it is noted that Albert Oeckl, who laid the foundations of one of the PR concepts that became relevant in Germany in the 1960s and later throughout Europe, believed that the principal task of PR technologies was to help individuals define their positions and to create opportunities and conditions for obtaining accurate information and making informed choices. On the basis of an analysis of theoretical approaches devoted to the study of public relations, the contributions of Harold Lasswell, Walter Lippmann, Anne Gregory, Ralph Tench, and others are also highlighted.[10]

As a result of the theoretical and methodological analysis, it is concluded that the essence of public relations lies in establishing and maintaining interaction, trust, and mutual understanding between an organization and the society surrounding it. This communication includes interaction with various stakeholders, such as customers, partners, employees, investors, the media, government institutions, and public organizations.

Public relations enables a given institution to address the following tasks:

1. To disseminate information about the activities, services, and products of a given institution.

2. To establish two-way communication between the institution, society, and its members regarding its activities, and to respond to questions of concern to them.

3. To build the institution's reputation, credibility, and image within society.

4. To respond to crisis situations and manage their negative impact on the organization's reputation.

5. To protect the organization's interests in society and seek support for its initiatives.

Effective public relations requires the development of communication strategies, the use of various communication channels such as press releases, press conferences, social media, corporate

[10] Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company; Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The Structure and Function of Communication in Society;. Tench, R., & Yeomans, L. (2017). *Exploring Public Relations*.

websites, and others, as well as the analysis and assessment of the results of communication activities.

Research shows that the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of PR make it possible to investigate this field in a systematic manner.

The second subchapter of the chapter is entitled ***"The Mechanism of Public Relations in the System of Public Administration and Its Application Features".*** At this stage, the discussion focuses specifically on public relations within the framework of state governance. First and foremost, public relations are interpreted as a manifestation of state – society relations, with emphasis placed on the communicative function of the state. In the context of the information society, and under the pressure of global challenges, similar transformations occur in governance systems worldwide. One of the most significant manifestations of these transformations is the gradual transition from representative democracy to direct democracy. Both the state and society are in search of closer channels of interaction, and the necessity of applying public relations in governance systems stems primarily from this demand. In order to explain the essence of public relations in public administration, this subchapter refers to the views and approaches of specialists from various Western and neighboring countries. As a result, the essence of public relations in governance, along with its functions and objectives, is clarified.

It is established that public relations in the system of public administration encompass the interaction of government bodies and institutions with the population, public associations, the business sector, and other stakeholders. Its core purpose is to establish dialogue and facilitate the exchange of information in order to ensure openness and transparency in the process of policy-making and implementation.

The main objectives of public relations in public administration include the following:

1. Enhanced dissemination of information. Government bodies must regularly inform the public about their activities, decisions taken, and future plans. This can be achieved through public

meetings, press releases, press conferences, and other forms of communication.

2. Consideration of public opinion. In preparing policies and adopting decisions, government institutions must take into account public opinion and suggestions. To this end, public hearings, consultations, and surveys may be organized to gather feedback and reflect the interests of various social groups.

3. Supporting citizen participation. Public relations in governance aim to encourage active citizen engagement in political and social life. This includes ensuring access to information, enabling participation in decision-making, improving the organization of public services, and introducing legal and institutional reforms that create favorable conditions for civic involvement.

4. Resolution of a conflict. Public relations can also play a role in resolving disputes and conflicts between government bodies and community groups. This may involve negotiations, conciliation procedures, and the search for compromise solutions.

Overall, public relations in public administration strengthen government credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness, while contributing to the development of democracy and civil society.

One of the issues addressed in this subsection is the mechanisms through which public relations is implemented in the system of public administration. In this regard, based on the general findings of the dissertation, these mechanisms have been classified, and the principal forms of public relations in public administration have been identified as press services and press releases, social media, the organization of public events, consultation and feedback, citizen journalism, public accountability and transparency, and others. The content of each of these forms is also explained.

The subchapter entitled ***"Features of the Application of Public Relations in Governance Systems of World Countries"*** provides an analysis of international practices in this field.

It is noted that, in terms of the diversity of methods applied, the United States occupies a leading position. With its diverse and dynamic society, the U.S. government relies heavily on PR strategies

to communicate with citizens, build trust, shape policies, and maintain its international standing.

Alongside the United States (US), the application of PR technologies in public administration is also prominent in the United Kingdom (UK). With its rich political history, unique society, and well-developed media institutions, the UK government relies on PR strategies to communicate effectively with citizens, foster public trust, and address complex political challenges. In the British government, public relations are an integral part of ensuring transparency and accountability. The government regularly utilizes press releases, official websites, and briefings to communicate policies and decisions to the public.

Among the countries of the world, the United States and the United Kingdom are the most successful in applying PR mechanisms. However, this does not mean that other countries have not achieved success in this field. France, with its rich history, also employs public relations in effective governance. In French administration, PR plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency and accountability. Government institutions and officials utilize various channels to communicate information to the public and respond to citizens' inquiries. The "*Loi CADA*" (French Freedom of Information Act) underscores the government's commitment to transparency. Initiatives such as "*Transparence Sante*" promote transparency in healthcare services and the pharmaceutical industry, ensuring public access to health-related information.

A brief overview of some other countries is also noteworthy. In China, PR initiatives were relatively limited prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Under Mao Zedong's leadership, China carried out extensive propaganda and mass mobilization campaigns, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. These campaigns relied heavily on public relations to promote communist ideology and exert influence over public opinion. By the late 1970s, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China began implementing economic reforms. PR played a key role in promoting the policy of "reform and openness," attracting foreign investment, and presenting China as a stable and attractive destination for global trade.

The second chapter of the dissertation is entirely devoted to the analysis of public relations within Azerbaijan's system of public administration. This chapter, entitled **"Features and Prospects of the Development of the PR Mechanism in the Modern Azerbaijani Public Administration System",** also consists of three subchapters.

The first subchapter is titled ***"Public Relations as a Manifestation of Socio-Political Communication between the State and Society: The Case of the Republic of Azerbaijan".*** It is noted here that, as an independent state, Azerbaijan encountered the problem of an underdeveloped PR sphere during the first years of independence, under conditions of chaos, weak governance, deepening crises in all spheres, and general instability.

Only after the return of National Leader Heydar Aliyev to the leadership of the country was public relations policy implemented in a purposeful and systematic manner. The political course pursued by our Great Leader in this field is being successfully continued by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev. At a new qualitative stage, the PR policy of our state is being further developed in a number of directions and is characterized by such features as modernization, the application of digital technologies, interactivity, and others.

In the early years of independence, the mechanisms employed by government bodies to implement the PR function in Azerbaijan can be grouped as follows:

1. State-owned media
2. Presidential addresses
3. Public events and rallies
4. Official publications
5. Community meetings
6. Government websites
7. Public notices and announcements.

The institutionalization of PR technologies as a mechanism within Azerbaijan's system of public administration began around 2010. One of the factors accelerating this process was the deep integration of Internet communication tools into society and their growing role in daily life. In particular, during this period, social networks increasingly assumed the role of a primary communication

channel. Government bodies began establishing official pages and platforms on these social media networks. Social networks play a significant role in shaping public relations within Azerbaijan's governance system, providing a platform for government institutions and officials to communicate with citizens, as well as to disseminate information on important events, legislative activities, and other matters related to state governance.

Through social networks, government institutions are able to rapidly and efficiently disseminate information regarding legislative changes, ongoing reforms, achievements, and state plans. In addition, these platforms enable public consultations, surveys, and discussions, allowing authorities to gauge citizens' opinions and incorporate them into the decision-making process.

Social media also promotes transparency and openness in governance by providing citizens with access to information and the ability to monitor government activities. These platforms create opportunities for public discussions and dialogue between the government and citizens, thereby contributing to the enhancement of trust and legitimacy in state institutions.

Thus, social networks play a crucial role in shaping public relations within Azerbaijan's system of public administration, contributing to the improvement of communication between the state and its citizens.

One of the processes that has played a significant role in establishing public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan is the development of e-government. During the initial phase of the "Electronic Azerbaijan" project in 2010-2012, e-government institutions, as well as institutional establishments such as ASAN and DOST, were created. These institutions have played a crucial role in shaping public relations at the state level.

The role of e-government in shaping public relations within Azerbaijan's system of public administration lies in facilitating effective communication between the state and its citizens. E-government provides access to information about government activities, encourages citizen participation in decision-making, and ensures transparency and openness in public administration.

The e-government system in Azerbaijan encompasses various online platforms, web portals, and electronic services, which allow citizens to access information, submit applications and complaints, participate in public consultations, and engage in discussions regarding government decisions.

E-government also contributes to the reduction of bureaucracy and the improvement of the quality of public services. Citizens can interact with government institutions remotely, saving time and enhancing service efficiency without the need to visit offices in person.

An important element of e-government is the use of social networks and online media for active engagement with the public. Government bodies can publish information about their activities, conduct online consultations and dialogues with citizens, and respond to their inquiries and requests.

Thus, in Azerbaijan, e-government plays a crucial role in shaping public relations, facilitating citizen participation in governance, and enhancing the transparency and efficiency of public administration.

The second subchapter of Chapter II, entitled ***"The Legal Status of Public Relations in the Public Administration System of the Republic of Azerbaijan"*** is devoted to the study of the normative-legal framework governing the implementation of public relations as a mechanism of state governance. It has been established that, although a unified legal framework for public relations within Azerbaijan's system of public administration does not currently exist, a number of legislative acts ensure the organization and implementation of this mechanism.

The main elements of the legal basis for shaping public relations in Azerbaijan's public administration system include the following:

1. The Constitution of Azerbaijan – the country's fundamental law, which guarantees citizens' rights to freedom of speech, thought, and access to information. It establishes the principles of democracy, transparency, and openness in public administration.

2. Law "on Freedom of Information" – regulates citizens' right to access information held by government bodies. This law obliges public authorities to provide information to the public under certain conditions and limitations.

3. Law “on Mass Communications” – establishes the legal foundations for the operation of mass media in Azerbaijan. It regulates procedures for obtaining and disseminating information and protects citizens’ rights to freedom of speech and access to information.

4. Law “on Access to Information” – guarantees citizens the right to obtain information held by state and municipal authorities. The law also provides mechanisms to ensure citizens’ access to information and the protection of their related rights.

5. Law “on Civil Service” – defines the fundamental principles of the work of civil servants. It obliges employees to adhere to the principles of transparency and openness in their duties, including interactions with the public.

In addition, the adoption of the Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan On Information, Informatization and Protection of Information, On Public Participation, On Mass Media, On Freedom of Information, On Media, and On the Consideration of Citizens’ Appeals, as well as the Rules for the Disclosure of Acts of State Bodies and Local Self-Government Bodies through Electronic Information Systems, the National Strategy on Increasing Transparency and Combating Corruption, and the National Action Plans for the Promotion of Open Government, has also been of considerable importance.

These laws and regulations ensure Azerbaijani citizens’ right to access information and participate in public administration, while also obliging government bodies to adhere to the principles of transparency and openness in their operations.

The legislative acts referred to in this area are not confined to those enumerated above. In addition, Azerbaijan has internal statutes of government institutions that serve to regulate these processes with greater precision. Within this subchapter, several such statutes have been examined, allowing for the identification of the duties and functions of public authorities in the organization of public relations.

The third subchapter of Chapter II is entitled ***“The Specific Features of the Establishment of the Public Relations Institute in Azerbaijan and Prospects for Its Improvement”.*** This subchapter

analyzes the process of institutionalizing public relations within the system of public administration in Azerbaijan.

Public relations institutions constitute an integral component of Azerbaijan's public administration structure. They play a crucial role in ensuring effective information exchange between state authorities and citizens. These institutions act as a bridge between the government and society, fostering better mutual understanding and cooperation.

Within their structure, public relations institutions encompass a variety of organizations and entities working toward the development of the national communication system. These include press services of government institutions, public councils, platforms for civic dialogue, media organizations, and other bodies that collectively contribute to building an open and trust-based dialogue between the state and society.

The primary aim of public relations institutions is to enhance the quality of public dialogue and communication within the country. They design and implement a range of activities and programs intended to raise citizens' awareness, foster civic consciousness, and promote public participation in decision-making processes.

Institutions of public communication also play a vital role in supporting and advancing freedom of expression and the pluralism of ideas in the country. They contribute to the sustainability of independent media and provide platforms for the free exchange of information and opinions.

Generally, public communication institutions within Azerbaijan's system of public administration serve as key instruments for strengthening democratic processes, as well as mutual trust and understanding between the state and society. They contribute to the development of an open and transparent society where every citizen has the opportunity to voice their opinions and participate in shaping the nation's future.

In order to determine the current state of the public relations institution within Azerbaijan's system of public administration, the organizational forms of this activity in several state bodies are examined. In this regard, primary attention is given to the

Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Within the structural divisions of the Presidential Administration, there are several bodies that perform the public relations function:

1. The Presidential Press Office;
2. The Department for Work and Communication with Non-Governmental Organizations;
3. The Department for Relations with Political Parties and the Legislative Branch.
4. The Department for Work with Citizens' Appeals.

Other key functions carried out by the structural divisions of the Presidential Administration in ensuring public relations are as follows:

1. Coordinating relations with the press services of other state institutions.
2. Participating in the implementation of the state's overall information policy.
3. Organizing the reception of citizens and reviewing their appeals.
4. Registering citizens' appeals and maintaining a unified database of such appeals.
5. Exercising oversight over the follow-up actions taken in response to citizens' appeals.
6. Organizing protocol services for international meetings.
7. Establishing and maintaining relations with political parties and non-governmental organizations.
8. Ensuring feedback by informing the Head of State about socio-economic, political, and other developments taking place in the country.

An analysis of the duties to be performed in the field of public relations across various state bodies in Azerbaijan makes it possible to reveal the general functional content of public relations within the system of public administration.

On the basis of this analysis, it can be shown that public relations is a governance mechanism established to ensure public awareness of the activities of a given public administration institution, transparency in decision-making and in the performance

of its direct functions, and, more broadly, accountability in the governance process as a whole. This mechanism involves the mass media, social networks, non-governmental organizations, political parties, and, ultimately, the citizen.

An analysis of the regulations governing the organization of public relations across various state institutions in Azerbaijan allows for the identification of common functions that are shared by all such bodies. These functions can be summarized as follows:

First, the implementation of the primary public relations policy of the respective state institution.

Second, collaboration with the mass media and dissemination of information to the public regarding the institution's activities through media channels.

Third, the creation and regular updating of the institution's official website with information on its activities.

Fourth, establishing mutual communication between the state institution and society.

Fifth, receiving, reviewing, and responding to citizens' appeals.

Sixth, the establishment of public oversight councils to monitor the activities of state institutions, facilitate their work, and provide relevant information.

Seventh, digitalizing the institution's operations and reintegrating them into the e-government system.

Two major processes have played a decisive role in the formation, development, and improvement of the public relations institution within Azerbaijan's system of public administration. The first of these is the set of reforms carried out in the last decade aimed at establishing open government in Azerbaijan. The country was among the first to declare its intention to join the Open Government Partnership. One year after the initiative was launched, in 2012, Azerbaijan adopted two key documents: the 2012-2015 Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government and the 2012-2015 National Action Plan for Combating Corruption. On 27 April 2016, the second action plan – the 2016-2018 National Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government – was adopted.

A portion of the measures outlined in the aforementioned National Action Plan has had significant importance for the development and improvement of the public relations mechanism within the country's system of governance. These measures include:

1) Facilitating access to information;

2) Ensuring that state institutions regularly inform the public about their activities;

3) Expanding public participation in the operations of state institutions;

4) Improving electronic services;

5) Increasing transparency in the activities of financial oversight bodies.

Another significant development in the advancement of public relations was the establishment of an IT-based monitoring system for the activities of state institutions. The Electronic Monitoring System (ems.gov.az) was created within the framework of the project "Strengthening Azerbaijan's Anti-Corruption Capacities", jointly implemented by the Council of Europe and the European Union, and coordinated by the Anti-Corruption Commission and the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This system was designed to electronically assess the implementation of the 2016–2018 National Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government by state institutions and to facilitate the electronic submission of information by these institutions. A total of 61 state bodies have been integrated into the Electronic Monitoring System, and the reports of each institution have been evaluated online for each specific provision and organization.

At present, the best factual basis for assessing the actual state of public relations in Azerbaijan's system of public administration is provided by the results of the regular monitoring conducted under the title "Information Transparency in State Institutions." Through these annual monitoring exercises carried out in recent years, it has become possible to obtain detailed information on the level of information transparency, accessibility of information, feedback mechanisms, and communication with society in central and local executive authorities.

These data, in turn, make it possible to evaluate the current state of public relations within the country's governance system.

At present, the organization of public relations in Azerbaijan's system of public administration manifests itself most clearly along three main vectors of current relevance. It is precisely these three vectors that constitute the object of the monitoring:

- the regular dissemination of information on the activities of central and local administrative bodies;
- the organization of feedback in the communication between central and local administrative bodies and society. In this case, the focus is mainly on issues of information exchange and the provision of electronic services by state bodies;
- the extent to which state bodies are integrated into a unified information database.

Overall, within the framework of the successful and innovative policy pursued under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the full and effective implementation of the public relations mechanism in the system of public administration is above all connected with efficient statecraft. During the period of independence, the development of this mechanism has coincided with the process of modernization of the system and institutions of public administration.

In the **Conclusion** of the dissertation, the findings obtained as a result of the research are summarized and recommendations of a practical nature are put forward. The applicant has come to the conclusion that the effectiveness of modern public administration depends to a considerable extent on the level of development of public relations mechanisms and requires continuous interaction between state bodies and citizens. The development of public communication mechanisms increases society's trust in state institutions and contributes to the adoption of more rational government decisions. The formation and development of a modern public relations system in the Republic of Azerbaijan constitutes an important component of the process of political modernization, while the model of PR implementation in public administration in our

country reflects positive experience in this sphere and stands out for its distinctive and noteworthy features.

The implementation of public relations at the state level in Azerbaijan plays a decisive role in shaping public perceptions, promoting national identity, and fostering effective communication between the government and citizens. The Azerbaijani government uses the capacities of PR as a strategic instrument to engage with various stakeholders, address public concerns, and build strong relationships both domestically and internationally.

The successful implementation of state policy aimed at the development of digital technologies, electronic platforms, and social networks has led to the emergence of new forms of public relations, while public support for state initiatives has expanded across all spheres. In this regard, the introduction of innovative services such as ASAN Service and DOST in the interaction between the state and society in our country is of particular practical significance. From the perspective of future development, the improvement of feedback mechanisms with citizens through digitalization and social networks serves to strengthen the role of public relations in public administration.

The main content and scientific contributions of the dissertation are reflected in the author's following scholarly articles and the materials of presentations delivered at scientific conferences:

1. Dövlət idarəçiliyində PR mexanizmləri: dünya praktikası // – Bakı: Geostrategiya, Beynəlxalq ictimai-siyasi, elmi-nəzəri jurnal, sentyabr-oktyabr, – 2023. № 5(77), – s.49-52.
2. Azərbaycanda dövlət səviyyəsində ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələr sahəsinin inkişaf dinamikası // – Bakı: İnsan və biosfer, – 2023. №18, – s.235-244.
3. Azərbaycan Respublikasında dövlət idarəetmə sistemində ictimaiyyətlə əlaqələrin hüquqi statusu // – Bakı: Geostrategiya, Beynəlxalq ictimai-siyasi, elmi-nəzəri jurnal, mart-aprel, – 2024. № 2(80), – s.38-42.
4. Связь с общественностью как механизм управленческой коммуникации // – Уфа: Вестник БИСТ, (Башкирского

института социальных технологий), – 2024. №2(63), – с.53-58. https: //doi.org/10.47598/2078-9025-2024-2-63-53-58./
5. Azərbaycanda PR texnologiyaları dövlət idarəçiliyində vətəndaş məmnunluğunun artırılması mexanizmi kimi // “Müasir dövrdə effektiv idarəetmənin problemləri” mövzusunda IX Respublika elmi-praktik konfransının materialları, – Bakı: ATMU, – 29 noyabr, – 2024, – s.282-284.
6. Связь с общественностью в контексте государственного управления // Международная научно-практическая конференция «История, политология, социология, философия: теоретические и практические аспекты», – Москва, LXXXVII, – 04 декабря, – 2024.
7. Информационная прозрачность в государственном управлении // Международная научно-практическая конференция «Экспериментальные и теоретические исследования в современной науке», – Новосибирск, CVII, – ноябрь, – 2024, – с.29-35.
8. Azərbaycanda dövlət idarəetmə orqanlarının kommunikasiya mexanizmləri // – Bakı: Geostrategiya, Beynəlxalq ictimai-siyasi, elmi-nəzəri jurnal, noyabr dekabr, – 2024. № 6(84).

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