

## **The Moderating Effect of Islamic Approach on the Relationship Between Public Relations Roles and Crisis Communication**

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**Abstract:** This study attempts to investigate the role of public relations and crisis communication in Yemen's organization. The study also attempts to determine the moderating effects of Islamic approach on the relationship. It employs a quantitative research design through self-administered questionnaire. The data is based on a total number of 200 public relations managers. The study uses correlation and regression analyses to analyze the data. The findings reveal that public relations roles and crisis communication are positively related. The Islamic approach partially moderates the relationship among public relations roles and crisis communication. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in considering an in-depth qualitative method to understand the detailed relationship among public relations roles and crisis communications. It is also recommends an examination, as well as expansion of the dimensions of the Islamic approach to further explore the various ways in which the Islamic approach contributes to organization management.

**Key words:** Public relations roles, Islamic approach, crisis management, instrument development, communication

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Public relations have a management function that determines the general policies and strategies of an organization. The organizational policy introduced is normally aimed to provide public understanding and acceptance of the prescribed policies. Public relations department helps to reduce the negative effects of the policy introduced between the internal and external organizational communication with the public opinion. In most cases during crisis, public relations strategies are helpful in spearheading the return to normality and minimizing the losses in terms of bottom line effect and reputation brought by the crisis (Burnett, 1998).

Public relations, therefore is the art and science of managing communication between and within an organization. It plays an important role in building, managing and sustaining positive organizational image. In short, public relations involves various activities such as the following: Evaluating public attitude and opinions toward the organization, overseeing procedures and policies are implemented successfully, communication programmers, developing rapport, good-will through two-way communication and building and sustaining healthy relationship between the organization and the public (Brown, 2007).

All organizations face various crises and issues within the organizations and with competitors as well as the public. Today it is becoming a common practice that all public relations departments are responsible and constitute the primary team members that are responsible to handle crises and solve them amicably. It is appealing to learn that in the past decades, crises have led to significant losses and economic damages on the lives of hundreds of people in organizations throughout the world (Putman and Pool, 1987). Numerous events in Yemen and several experiences expressed by Yemenis have provided these researchers the motivation to study crisis communication. The public and private sectors in Yemen faced many crises that constituted threats to the achievement of their objectives. Fortunately, most of them did not lead to loss of lives. The fire in one of the cigarette factories called Kamaran, the global agent in Yemen, caused stoppage of cigarette production in 1999. However, the company acted quickly by importing similar brands from other countries so that customers did not experience shortage of the cigarettes. The subsequent public relations campaign pertaining to the problem assured Kamaran's customers that they will pay the same price with the same quality despite the fact that product was being imported from elsewhere. The company with the help of public relations had, therefore

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successfully managed the crisis and preserved the reputation of the company (Al-Bawab, 2003). This handling of crisis is an example of how public relations safeguards the good reputation of the business and protect the organizational image and trust from their customers and clients.

Thus, this study has been designed to explore and examine the objectives, delivery mechanisms and support system of the public relations managers in Yemen. Previous studies on crisis communication management have provided us with some insights and understanding of managing crises. However, the model of crisis management, developed by modern administrative theory, ignores certain Islamic aspects (Taylor, 2003). The inclusion of Islamic perspectives in the Western model would bring a holistic administrative model of crisis management. Moreover, Yemen is a Muslim country and has to follow Islamic perspectives when solving problems including organizationally related crises.

**Public relations in Yemen:** Yemen is known for its great civilization which goes back to ancient times. Many great states have emerged on its land and the ruins of these states are still visible to this day. The people of Yemen are the people of civilization while they preserve their traditions and customs they use the means of modern life and develop with it. Ancient Yemen practiced the art of public relations in its conventional concepts thousands of years ago through its trade relations. This is because Yemen was known in the ancient times to be prosperous and flourishing to the extent that they called it happy Yemen and the happy land of the Arabs. The Holy Quran described it as a good land. Allah the Almighty says:

Certainly there was a sign for Saba in their abode;  
two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the  
sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him:  
A good land and a Forgiving Lord! (Sabaa: 15).

Public relations in Yemen is a new field in both public and private organizations. It dates back only in 1962. The function was mainly used by the government as exemplified by the mention of the function in government documents that indicated that public relations existed in government ministries. According to Al-Soofee (2004), it is only recently that the private sector has started using public relations due to increasing business activities in the country and the need for the organizations to improve their image. Universities in Yemen started offering courses in public relations in 1991 in the Faculty of Human Sciences. Later, public relations courses moved to the faculty of communication and is now one of the most important departments in the faculty, enrolling more students than the other departments. However, the

practice of public relations is limited and not well understood due to a lack of understanding regarding the role of public relations and functional roles of other departments within the organization. A study conducted on the role of public relations established that the function's role in the minds of many senior administrators was limited to media efforts and not paying attention to other functions such as research, planning and evaluation (Al-Bakri, 1999; Al-Soofee, 2004).

Al-Bwab focused on public relations and its role in managing crises in organizations and banks in Yemen. The researcher employed a survey methodology. His study focused on administration, organization and allocation of human resources, as well as the organizations' goals and activities and the extent to which they actually employed public relations. The researcher also conducted a comparative study, identifying the areas of consistency and difference in the attitudes of the top management of organizations that did employ public relations personnel. The researcher also emphasized the prominent role of public relations in managing crises in some organizations, particularly within the private companies.

Another important study is that of Al-Soofee (2004) which focused on the attitudes of administrators towards the management of public relations and its responsibilities in government departments in Yemen. The findings of the study indicated that the practice of public relations continues to be far removed from any scientific understanding. This is due to a lack of understanding of the boundaries of the role of public relations and a mingling of the functional roles of public relations departments with other functions. Ironically, although 88.2% of respondents acknowledged the importance of public relations, the study established that the role of public relations in the minds of senior administrators centered upon media efforts to the exclusion of other functions such as research, planning and evaluation.

A more relevant study to the current research is the one conducted by Musallam in Kuwait. The study investigated whether public relations had been used as a source and base for designing communication strategies in crisis situation for both public and private sectors in Kuwait. The study which employed a survey method, involved all major public and private sector organizations with a sample of 50 public and 50 private organizations in the country. The results evidently showed that there were small numbers of well defined communication strategies used by organizations for dealing with crises. The research further indicated that there was a limited role played by public relations practitioners in dealing with

crises in the country. Such findings called for more research attention and investigation for better understanding of crises and the various ways of dealing with them.

**Crisis management:** With the world becoming borderless, organizations in the world are not immune from encountering crises. If not managed well, crises can have negative implications on organizational image. Crises have the potential of disrupting the operations of an organization for they contain dysfunctional properties that could damage the corporate image and reputation of an organization. However, the dysfunctional syndrome could be changed to useful function if properly managed. On the other hand, crisis would have functional properties that would propel the organization image to remarkable light success and would enhance the organization goodwill.

Thus, crisis management is relevant to public relations experts concerned not only to put in place crisis detection strategies but equally devise possible mechanism for prevention, effective and efficient management, as well as better ways of transforming and channeling them in a manner that will be beneficial to the organization. According to Nkwocha (1999), crisis is any event, issue, occurrence or situation that is described as a turning point for better or for worse. Crisis is also a period of heightened uncertainty that increase the demand to plan at the time in which both external and internal pressure change the goals and operational practices of an organization.

Nwosu (1996), outline numerous cause of crisis to include manager corporate ego, natural mistake by managers or other workers. Our founded and unfounded fears, ignorance, non preparedness, act of God occurrence, wrong decision, crisis of interest, environment waste, poor personnel management and motivation, poor communication, manufacture of substandard goods, inability to read the warning hand writing on the wall inform of signs, lack of vigilance, poor power of corporate problem detection, non existence of crisis plan, poor understanding and handling of the important stages in a crisis life cycles, existence of trigger threat adverse government policies, legal battles, community and employee dissatisfaction, sexual harassment in work place, political and religion instability, leakage, lack or inadequate security, downsizing, product, poor financial management embezzlement, accident, sudden death, poor reputation war, mental disorder among others are the cause of crisis (Fink, 1986).

Public relations practitioners are mostly concerned in the proactive crisis management. To be effective and efficient the public relations experts are required to be

skilful technical knowledgeable and aimed with full information necessary to the effective crisis management. One of the best methods of handling crisis is to plan ahead anticipate crisis at any moment or point in time, mapping of preventive control measures and strategies in the eventful occurrence of crisis at all look. Management of crisis is very wasteful compared to timely crisis management.

Crisis management method and plan results from the premise established after an elongated discussion which has led us to grasp the meaning of crisis cause of a crisis and other valences associated with crisis, we now proceed to the methods and plans that will enable a public relations practitioner management. There are many approaches to crisis management as postulated by many experts but what is interesting among those methods is the much related similarities and it depends on the nature of the crisis. Effective crisis management involves capturing the initiative, taking control situation before the company is swallowed, planning for the crisis is another major determine out for the life of the organization.

One way of handling crises is through public relations roles and the Western concept of public relations role is almost inseparable with crisis communication and this is done through well planned communication strategies. However many organizations in third world countries, planned communication strategy is almost non existence, as the systems do not care much about strategy, planning or preparedness of crises. Thus, the top management in third world countries mostly depends on random response (Al-Bakri, 1999).

**Islamic approach in managing crisis:** The numerous and diverse tools that are used in investigating crises originated from various secular rules and theories. The purpose of these theories and rules is to find permanent solutions to the crises that can emerge from time to time due to the nature of human life. However, most of these theories and rules rely on the principle of balance of interest which usually sides with the strong party. On the other hand, the method of finding solution to crises in most Arabian and Islamic context is derived from the rules laid down by Allah, even though it sacrifices one's personal interests for the sake of legitimate public interests.

The Holy Quran contains several verses that suggest how to resolve all types and forms of discords, crises and conflicts. Allah said:

But no by the Lord, they can have no (real) faith, until they make the judge in all disputes between them and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions but accept them with the fullest conviction (Al-Nisaa: 65).

As explained above, the model for crisis management found in modern administrative theory ignores certain Islamic perspectives. In other words, the modern theories of crisis management are not necessarily consistent with Islamic principles which are crucial for development of a comprehensive understanding of crisis management.

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) has set an excellent example for humankind on how to deal with crises, in which threats could be turned into opportunities and negative situation could be changed into positive ones. For instance, the war of Khandaq provides us one of the best examples of communication in and management of crisis. The perspective is based on strong faith, determination and dependence upon Allah.

Crisis usually occurs because it is determined by Allah. Therefore, Islam considers crisis as something natural. The Qur'an made it clear that crisis exists because Allah willed them to be so.

And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community but they will not cease to differ, except those whom your Lord has shown mercy (Hud: 118-119).

Crisis has to occur because it is natural. From the verses of the Qur'an quoted above one could rightly conclude that crisis is inevitable among human beings and the only alternative is to either plan before their occurrence or resolve and manage them when they occur.

**Fundamentals of crisis management in Islam:** In Islam, crisis management is based on principles derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Qur'an comprises of confirmation, affirmation, punishment, censure, concealment, rebuke, the order to be patient and also passages that discuss crisis events related to the life of the Prophet (PBUH). The Qur'an contains many verses that discuss crisis. Principles of Crisis Management in Islamic perspective are as follows:

**Maintaining relationship with Allah:** A believer should have a sense of serenity and confidence in Allah, the exalted when conflicts and crisis occur and after that confidence in one's self, keeping in mind the statement of Allah, And whoever depends upon Allah, He is sufficient for him (Al-Alaq:3).

Having confidence in Allah during crises is explained in the following verse:

For, indeed with hardship [will be] ease.  
Indeed with hardship [will be] ease (Surah Al-Shua'ara: 5-6).

Allah, the exalted encourages the believers not to grieve or worry:

So do not worry and do not grieve and you will be superior if you are [true] believers (Al-Imran: 139).

Indeed before the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (PBUH) stood and pointed at various places on the ground, saying:

This is the place where so-and-so will meet his end and this is the place where so-and-so will meet his end.

The Sahabah said, "He did not make a mistake about the place of any of them". After their deaths, their corpses were dumped in a dry well and the Prophet (PBUH) stood before the well and said:

We have already found what our Lord promised us to be true. Have you found what your Lord promised to be true?

**Learning from the past:** Allah's Messenger (PBUH) emphasized the importance of not falling into the same error twice: "The believer is not stung from the same hole twice" (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Muslim). One can benefit from a crisis by finding out who is a supporting a friend and who is a running away from an enemy. The poet says:

We must take benefit from our past experiences as well as the experiences of others and take steps to make projections about the future based upon knowledge of the past in order to benefit from our time; otherwise it will slip away and go to waste.

Ja'bir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would teach them how to seek guidance from Allah in all affairs just as he would teach them a Surah of the Qur'an. Notice that he said, all affairs that is, in major affairs but also in minor ones; so what do you think about decisions related to crises? Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would say:

When one of you is concerned about a matter, he should perform two rak'aahs, other than an obligatory salat and then say, 'O Allah, I seek a decision from You by your knowledge.

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would also say:

One who performs salat to seek Allah's help in a decision will not fail and one who consults others will not regret.

**Consultation and unity:** When a crisis occurs, it has to be managed through consultation. Allah says:

And consult them in the matter. And when you have decided then rely upon Allah (Surah Al-Imran: 159).

There must be cooperation between individuals of the organization to solve problems and resolve crises that may confront the institution. Allah says in the Qur'an:

And cooperate in righteousness and piety but do not cooperate in sin and aggression (Surah Al-Ma'idah: 2).

After consultations have been made, available alternatives should be weighed and choose the one most likely to solve the problem and secure benefit for the project and the organization without violating the Shariah. This is what the Prophet (PBUH) did when he gathered his companions before the battle of the Trench and sought their opinions. Among the suggestions was that from Salman, the Persian (may Allah be pleased with him) who proposed the digging of a trench. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) accepted his suggestion, for it was the closest to what was needed.

The Western perspective of crisis management could be enhanced with the inclusion of Islamic principles which are based on the Shariah and transmitted to us through the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah which left no matter related to this life or the hereafter. Allah says:

This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion (Surah Al-Ma'idah: 3).

**Adherence to good values and courage:** When the Prophet (PBUH) faced crises and economic trials did not make any concessions regarding the values, morals and ethical behavior which Allah had commanded. This is the reason why he deserved divine intervention after the onset of the crisis and deserving of ease after hardship.

A Muslim must not look at crises as if they are all evil. Pessimism has a crippling effect on straight thinking which is necessary for finding appropriate solutions. Al-Shaffie said regarding this, do not you see the ocean? On its surface corpses float while in its deepest depths pearls abide. Related to values is avoiding anger during crises: Anger interferes with clear thinking and the ability to concentrate which leads to haphazard decisions.

Abu Hurayrah reported that a man asked the Prophet (PBUH) for advice. He told him, "Do not get angry." He repeated it several times: "Do not get angry." Patience is one of the most important qualities a leader must possess

at a time of crisis. The importance of patience is made clear by the stand taken by the Prophet (PBUH) in solving the crisis of the economic boycott imposed upon him and those who believed in him before the Hijrah. Allah says:

O' you, who believe, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient (Surah Al-Baqarah: 153).

**Hypotheses of the study:** The flowing hypotheses derived from the theoretical that will be tested as to find the answer to the possible relationship between the variables:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between public relations role and crisis management

H<sub>2</sub>: The Islamic approach moderates the relationship between public relations roles and crisis management

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research design:** The research events in this study consist of a quantitative research design. The analyses from quantitative data confirm the validity and reliability of composite variables. In addition, the relationships of the variables and moderating model hypothesized in this study are tested. To do so, the strength of the relationship between the constructs using a single level multiple regression of the constructs is tested.

The targeted population of this study is public relations managers who work in public and private organizations in Yemen. There are about 325 organizations based on the data from the Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008. Consistent with Zikmund (2000), the stratified random sampling technique was adopted for this study because it considers the size of the sample, as well as the variation in each group of the population by selecting a separate random sample from each subgroup rather than a single random sample from the entire group. Stratified sampling increases statistical effectiveness, thus satisfying the requirement for improved quality of data. The organizations were selected based on size. In other words, the researchers selected the organizations with the largest number of employees. Only organizations with a total number of employees exceeding 100 were included in the sample. In each selected organization, a senior officer was contacted asking for permission for the participation of the employees in the study. The rule was that the respondents had to be from the public relations department or at least involved in the public relations role. The public relations managers were those responsible in managing and handling public relations roles in the organization in both public and private sectors. When given the green light to conduct the study in that

organization, the public relation managers were contacted to participate in the survey. However, some of the organizations did not have public relation managers, so the person in charge of public relations was contacted to participate in the survey.

**Research instrumentation:** Since, the survey was conducted in Yemen and because the questionnaire was originally developed in English, thus it was necessary to translate the instrument into the Arabic language. In order to ensure that the Arabic version correctly reflects the meaning and nuances of the original instrument, back translation was conducted through an academican from the Department of English Language in the Faculty of Arts, Sana'a University.

Public relations roles which are conceptualized in four dimensions, the diminutions of which originated from Broom indicating the following four roles frequently played by public relations practitioners: Communication technician, communication facilitator, expert prescribers and solving problem (Broom and Smith, 1979). The diminution has the following elements to measure public relations roles and a total of 34 statements are used to measure the variables.

Crisis communications are conceptualized in five dimensions: Concession, justification, excuse, diversion and denial as proposed by Huang *et al.* (2005). A total of 19 statements are used to measure the variable.

Islamic approach is assumed to be the moderating variable in this study. The instrument which is and self-constructed, adopts a number of statements from various sources, is used to measure the crisis communication strategies employed in the public and the private sectors in Yemen. A total number of 24 statements are used to measure the Islam approach variable.

All measures use a 5-point Likert scale for measuring each item. The Likert scale is designed to examine how strongly the respondents agree or disagree with certain statement which represent an item of the measurement scale (Sekaran, 2003). With 5-point Likert scale, this study used 1 to represent strongly disagree; 2 to represent disagree; 3 to represent neutral; 4 to represent agree and 5 to represent strongly agree.

**Data collecting procedure:** The population of this study consisted of all public relations managers in public and private sectors in Yemen. In order to collect empirical data, questionnaires were prepared and a cover letter was attached to each questionnaire that outlined the purpose of the study. The questionnaires were personally distributed and administered by the researcher from

25th November, 2009 to the end of March, 2010. To have a good response rate, the methods of distributing the questionnaires personally were chosen. The Yemeni culture in such situations appreciates the personal presence of the researcher. This is what the researcher perceived from the respondents' hospitality, especially when they knew that the researcher came from long distance. The data collected were checked, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 for the purposes of data analysis. Prior to the major statistical analyses, preliminary data analyses were conducted to test the internal reliability, the assumptions of the parametric statistical tests and the construct validity.

## RESULTS

**Participants:** Among the employees in the sample, 81.5% (n = 163) of the respondents were male while 18.5% (n = 37) were female and this reflects the situation in Yemen where males dominate the field of public relations. About 52.5% (n = 105) of the respondents were between the age of 31-40, 28.5% (n = 57) were age 21-30, 18% (n = 36) were age 41 and above while 1% (n = 2) were below 20 years of age. Among the employees in the sample, 73.0% (n = 146) of the respondents were from the public sectors while only 27% (n = 54) were from the private sector. Contrary to the public sectors, the private sectors consist of small units with very limited number of public relations officers. Thus, the results suggest that the proportion of respondents by the type of sectors represented the actual population in both sectors.

The public relations officers are the people who performed the major role in the department. Over 32% (n = 65) of the respondents were Public Relations Managers, 24.5% (n = 49) were Administrative Managers, 18% (n = 36) were Public Relation Managers and 12% (n = 24) were High Official Public Relations while 13% (n = 26) of the respondents were others. Approximately, 30% (n = 60) of the officers and managers in the public relations department had at least 3 years' work experience, 28.5% (n = 57) of them had 4-8 years of work experience, 28.5% (n = 57) of them had >8 years of work experience while 13.5% (n = 26) had <1 year of work experience. This indicates that the majority of the respondents had between 1-3 years of work experience.

**Hypotheses testing:** Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation and reliability of the variables. Mean score for the public relations roles recorded the highest mean

Table 1: Mean, standard deviations and reliability of the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Crisis management	2.7969	0.46627	0.93
Public relation roles	2.9110	0.78870	0.94
Islamic approach	1.6281	0.52542	0.75

Table 2: Descriptive statistics correlation between IVs and crisis management

Crisis management	Values
Public relation role	0.209**
Islamic approach	0.103

\*\*p<0.01

score ( $x = 2.91$ ) with a standard deviation = 0.78. Reliability for public relations roles the was  $\alpha = 0.94$ . Islamic approach had the lowest mean score ( $x = 1.62$ ) with standard deviation = 0.525. Reliability for Islamic approach was  $\alpha = 0.75$ . Crisis management as a dependent variable had a mean score of 2.79 with a standard deviation of 0.466. Reliability for crisis management was  $\beta = 0.93$ . Hence, the instrument used in this study was reliable. The descriptive statistics show that all the variables had a significant correlation at 0.05 significant levels. Thus, it shows that all the variables fulfill the requirements of predictive validity where all the variables had a significant correlation. In addition, the significant correlations of the variables in the study fulfilled the assumptions of multivariate analysis.

Table 2 shows the correlation between all the IVs and crisis management. It is found that the Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) between crisis management and public relation roles was 0.209 while significant value of  $<0.01$ . It shows that there was a significant relationship between both variables. Hypothesis 1 posits that there is a positive relationship between public relations role and crisis. The Pearson correlation result in Table 2 shows that  $r = 0.209$ ,  $p > 0.05$  indicating the relationship between public relations role and crisis management is significant. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted. The relationship between Islamic approach and crisis management was not significant ( $r = 0.103$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This may be due to the fact that the variable was newly integrated into the model of public relations and crisis management. However, it does not mean that the variable is not important.

Hypothesis 2 states that the Islamic approach moderates the relationship between public relations roles and crisis management in Yemen organizations. Consistent with the suggestion of Baron and Kenny (1986), hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Separate regressions were run for one dependent variable. The regression analysis involves comparing  $R^2$  for one model. The first model, consist of predictors and moderator, therefore set of independent variables agreement scores were entered as the first step in the regression. The scores of Islamic approach were

Table 3: Effect of moderating variable on crisis management

Dependent variables	Step 1: Independent Variables (IV)	Step 2: Moderating vs. IVs	Step 3: Interaction (moderating x IVs)
Crisis management	Public relations roles ( $\beta = 0.028$ , $t = 0.662$ ) Crisis communication strategy ( $\beta = 0.199$ , $t = 3.872$ ) $R^2$ change = 0.175 Standard Error = 0.42667 Degree of freedom = (196)	Public relations roles ( $\beta = 0.028$ , $t = 0.657$ ) Crisis communication strategy ( $\beta = 0.199$ , $t = 3.841^*$ ) Islamic Approach ( $\beta = -0.002$ , $t = -0.030$ ) $F = 10.360^*$ $R^2 = 0.419$ $\Delta R^2 = 0.158$ $R^2$ change = 0.000 Standard Error = 0.43 Degree of freedom = (195)	Public relations roles x Islamic approach ( $\beta = -0.024$ , $t = 0.253$ ) Crisis communication strategy x Islamic approach ( $\beta = 0.021$ , $t = 0.190$ ) $F = 6.185^*$ $R^2 = 0.184$ $\Delta R^2 = 0.154$ Standard Error = 0.43 Degree of freedom = (192)

entered as the second step in the second model which contain both the predictor, moderator and interaction terms. The third step includes the scores of interaction between the independent variable agreement and Islamic approach. Based on hypothesis, we expected the interaction between independent agreement and Islamic approach measures and dependent variable to remain significant after were added to the regression model (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

The hypothesis predicts that Islamic approach moderates crisis management in the organization. Multiple hierarchical regressions were applied to test this hypothesis (Table 3). Instep 1, the main effect of independent variables as a set was a significant variance for crisis management and 17.5% of variance was accounted for ( $R^2 = 0.175$ ,  $F = 13.883$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In step 2, the moderating variable was included in the equation. Islamic approach together with other independent variables, as a set is a significance variance for crisis management which counted also 17.5% of variance indicating no change in the  $R^2$ . Overall the model indicates that the Islamic approach has significant regression on crisis management ( $F = 10.360$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Islamic approach also was not significantly related to crisis management ( $a = -0.002$ ,  $t = -0.030$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This result shows that crisis management was not affected by Islamic approach.

The three steps hierarchical regression were also used to test the Independent Variables (IVs) and its dimensions and Islamic approach as a moderating variable towards crisis management dimension. Step 1 consist the dimensions of public relations role namely communication technique, expert prescriber, problem solving process, communication facilitator, traditional role, managerial roles and effect integrative dimension. It is found that overall model significantly explained 52.2% of variance

( $R^2 = 0.522$ ,  $F = 13.422$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It is also found that there is only one dimension in public relations role is significantly predicted integrative dimension that is communication technician ( $\beta = 0.194$ ,  $t = 2.471$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Four Islamic approach, dimensions were then inserted in step 2. The equation in step 2 explained 55.3% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.553$ ,  $F = 11.701$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), giving a significant 3% increase in variance ( $R^2$  change = 0.030,  $p < 0.05$ ). Only one dimension is significantly associated to integrative crisis management dimension that is confidence in Allah ( $\beta = 0.290$ ,  $t = 2.591$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Step 3 involves the interaction of independent variables and Islamic approach dimensions and integrative dimension. Overall the model explained 82.9% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.835$ ,  $F = 7.831$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This interaction also shows a significant increase in variance ( $R^2$  change = 0.282,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thirteen interactions have a significant effect to integrative dimension, they confidence in Allah X communication technician ( $\beta = 0.481$ ,  $t = 2.103$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confidence in Allah X justification ( $\beta = 0.065$ ,  $t = 3.062$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and diversion ( $\beta = 0.030$ ,  $t = -2.037$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confidence in Allah X communication facilitator ( $\beta = -0.494$ ,  $t = -2.063^*$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confidence in Allah X individual ( $\beta = -0.462$ ,  $t = -2.583$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), relationship with Allah X communication technician ( $\beta = -0.673$ ,  $t = -2.892^*$ ), relationship with Allah X justification ( $\beta = -0.919$ ,  $t = -3.020$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship with Allah X individual ( $\beta = 0.825$ ,  $t = 3.379$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), learning from the past X technician ( $\beta = 0.825$ ,  $t = 3.379$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) learning from the past X problem solving process ( $\beta = -0.482$ ,  $t = -2.462$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), learning with traditional role ( $\beta = 0.275$ ,  $t = 2.484$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), consultation X justification ( $\beta = 0.794$ ,  $t = 2.695$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), consultation and diversion ( $\beta = -0.381$ ,  $t = -2.017$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), consultation and expert prescriber ( $\beta = 0.587$ ,  $t = 2.132$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

In step 3, it is found that there is a significant change of  $R^2$  of 0.282. This change indicates that overall the model has a significant increase in total variance explained for about 28.2% ( $R^2$  change = 0.282,  $F$  changed = 3.499,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, this finding shows that Islamic approach significantly moderate overall the model of this test.

## DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis outlined in this study is to study the relationship between public relations roles and crisis management. It was found that there is a significant relationship between public relations roles and crisis management. This finding suggests that the more an organization allows public relations managers to play their role in crisis management, the more the organization can

manage its crisis. According to Cutlip *et al.* (2006), the practice of public relations could help establish as well as maintain a positive link between an organization and its public. This is capable of promoting and sustaining a good organizational image by developing rapport between the organization and its public through a two-way communication. As Ali (2002) pointed out, public relations play an important role in dealing with crises by understanding the reaction of the public, organizing media campaigns in response to crises and making the public understand the position of the organization. As crises could result into undesirable consequences for an organization, it is therefore imperative that organizations in Yemen adopt public relations as necessary tool in evaluating corrective actions designed to manage crises. The literature review also indicates that an increasing number of scholars are now defending the importance of public relations role in managing crises. The concept suggested that successful relationship involve mutual benefit for both an organization and its publics. This finding is consistent with some Western literature such as Marra (1998) and Hearit (1996), Benoit who support the hypothesis of this present study that those public relations managers contribute positively in dealing with crises. However, this finding is not similar to Arabic literature such as Musallam, Farid (1999) and Mahmoud (1999) in which the role of public relations in managing crises is not emphasized.

The results of the current study support the hypothesis that public relations role is related to crisis management in public and private sectors in Yemen. However, the role of public relations in the Arab world including Yemen is not as it is used in the West in terms of problem solving, technical aspects, providing expert advice to top management and facilitating communication (Cutlip *et al.*, 2006). Maujud (2000) recommended that companies should stress on the importance of improving public relations by developing a strategy that focuses on dealing with the public and the media outlets during crisis. In the Western studies (Marra, 1998; Hearit, 1996), it was revealed that a significant relationship existed between public relations roles and crisis management suggests that public relations managers believe that their organizations are doing a better role in dealing with crisis events.

This study illustrates the significant role of public relations continue to play as a crisis management function. These results demonstrate how public relations management continues to play a successful role in promoting the image of the organization when dealing with crises. This study also demonstrates how the six dimensions (communication technician, problem-solver



facilitator, communication facilitator, managerial role, expert prescriber and traditional role) of public relations roles relate to crisis management. The results of the study revealed that communication technician had a significant relationship with crisis management, considering that communication is one of the key aspects of crisis management. In this study, the roles of the communication technician include but are not limited to communicating with an emphasis on issues and matters important for the organization having freedom in taking administrative decisions, informing the supreme management about the general reaction towards policies, steps and behaviors of the organization, identifying problems of the public relations and communicating them to others in the organization and working towards involving the supreme management in every step of the public relations programs. This provides a means for guidance in dealing with crises and it is line with the two-ways symmetric model in order to evaluate and understand messages between parties concerned (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). The two-ways symmetric model centre upon the evaluation of messages between two parties and the emphasis of mutual understanding in a manner that results in a win-win situation between the source and the receiver.

Research hypothesis 2 stated that the Islamic approach would moderate the relationship between the role of public relations and crisis management in Yemen organization. The results of the study confirmed that Islamic approach based on its dimensions contributed a great deal to crisis management in Yemen organizations. The hierarchical regression analysis performed confirmed the moderating effect of the dimensions of Islamic approach in the relationship between the role of public relations and crisis management.

Islam is a complete way of life. It has a set of goal and values that cover all aspects of human life, including social, economic and political issues. It is a religion that organizes one's life completely in this world and paves the way for salvation in the hereafter. Thus, it plays a critical in dealing with crises. The importance of the Islamic approach is evident in the Qur'an and Sunnah through serenity and confidence in Allah (Al-Imran: 139), maintaining relationship with Allah, learning from the past such as the false slander incident of Sayyidah Aisha (R.A.), consultation and unity (Al-Ma'idah: 2) and adherence to good values and courage (Al-Baqarah: 153) among other things. The results of the study revealed a significant relationship between the dimensions of Islamic approach (confidence in Allah, relationship with Allah, learning from the past and consultation and unity) with

the independent. Being an Islamic country, social life and economic dealings in Yemen are influenced by Islamic values. For instance, although the importance of the role of public relations in dealing with crises is acknowledged in both public and private organizations in Yemen, the way this role is carried out in western countries differs from the way it is carried out in Yemen. Instead of standardized procedures in dealing with crises, the top management has a major say in the way crises are dealt with in Yemen. This may be as a result of the doctrine of Shurah (consultation) and the fact that Muslims should follow their leaders for as long as their actions do not contravene Islamic values.

Without doubt, Islamic principles were definitely important in dealing with crises. It may not have been documented in the Western literature or in the Western model of crisis management but the truth of the matter is whenever a crisis of any sort befalls Muslims, they turn to Allah. When there is no rain, Muslims perform Salat al Istisqa (prayer for rain) and for any calamity, even if pricked by a thorn, a Muslim is asked to say a prayer the meaning of which is "Definitely, we are from Allah and to Him is our return. O' Allah, grant reward in my calamity and grant in its place a good substitute". As narrated in Bukhari and Muslim if there is an infection on the body, wet the Shahaadat finger with saliva from the mouth, place it on the ground and then rub it on the infection while reciting a prayer that is translated as:

In the name of Allah with the blessings of this soil of our land which I mixed with the saliva so that the ailment is cured by the order of our Lord.

These are just a few of many examples of how crises are dealt with through the Islamic approach. A crisis represents a difficult situation that requires a serious attention. As defined in Merriam-Webster, a crisis is "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially, one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome". Thus, Islamic principles guide Muslims in the event they encounter crises, even though such principles are not incorporated in the Western approach of dealing with crises.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study focused on an exploratory investigation of the relationship of public relations roles and crisis management in Yemen. It also focused on the significance of Islamic approach as a moderating factor for all those aforementioned variables.

The present study supports the model of public relations roles where the major avenues of future research are evident from a review of the current studies of the crisis management. The results of the study revealed a positive relationship between public relations and crisis management. The findings enhanced our understanding of the public relations roles and crisis management in organizations. This research has also provided us with a better understanding of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables with the Islamic approach as a moderating variable. While developing a reliable and valid scale for such a relationship is still in its early stage, the attempts of this study to develop such a scale for the role of Islamic approach is noteworthy. Thus, this study makes a valuable contribution to communication and public relations science in Yemen on investigating public relations and crisis management. The findings stress the need to evolve better public relations role in crisis management in Yemen.

In summary, this study made a contribution to the body of knowledge by investigating the relationship of the role of public relations and crisis management. Specifically, the study is invaluable based on the following reasons: Indicating the importance of the role of public relations managers in crisis management; presenting a real picture of current crisis communication; introducing the Islamic approach as a valuable tool for crisis management; filling the knowledge gap by providing an empirical study concerning the relationship of the role of public relations and crisis management and supporting the need for the organizations in Yemeni to pay more attention to crisis management.

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