

# A Needs Analysis of Arabic Communication Model for Public Relations Officers in the Healthcare Industry

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## Abstract

Arabic communication possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart from other cultures. Understanding the specific aspects of Arabic communication is crucial, particularly for public relations officers who interact with Arab patients in healthcare settings. The increasing language and communication barriers between healthcare providers and Arab patients necessitate the involvement of public relations officers as mediators, interpreters, or facilitators. However, non-native Arabic speakers among public relations officers until now face misconception and confusion of task, lack of knowledge on Arabic communication and Arabic culture during their daily work at the healthcare centers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by public relation officers in healthcare centers when attending to Arab patients and to analyze the needs of these officers toward the development of a comprehensive Arabic communication model for public relations in the healthcare industry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five public relation officers from different healthcare centers in Kuala Lumpur. The collected data was analyzed using NVivo data analysis software version 12. This qualitative research incorporates Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) theory of needs analysis, focusing on three key components: necessities, lacks, and wants. The findings reveal that public relations officers encounter difficulties due to the lack of references or guidelines on Arabic communication, an uncooperative working environment, language barriers in translating medical terminology, and the use of uncommon Arabic dialects. The study also highlights the PR officers' pressing needs, which include the implementation of an Arabic communication model as a guiding framework for communication with Arab patients, as well as the enhancement of their communication skills and Arabic language proficiency to ensure high-quality service provision to Arab patients in healthcare centers.

**Keywords:** Needs analysis, Arabic language, communication, public relations, healthcare

## 1.0 Introduction

Malaysia has gained growing recognition as a desirable healthcare destination, attracting individuals who seek medical solutions for a diverse array of health conditions. These encompass essential medical treatments, as well as aesthetic and therapeutic treatments (BioSpectrum Asia, 2018, May 1). Healthcare services in Malaysia encounter the presence of Arab patients from diverse Arab nations seeking medical treatment (Samsudin et al., 2022). The arrival of these Arab patients necessitates the preparedness of the Malaysian healthcare sector in addressing various aspects related to the management of Arab patients throughout their entire treatment process.

Language is identified as a significant issue in communication (Brunton & Cook, 2018). Communication serves as the bridge between acquiring information and transmitting it to others. The communication methods employed vary depending on the specific needs of different groups of people. Within the medical field, effective communication plays a crucial role in enabling medical professionals and healthcare personnel to carry out essential care procedures

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for their patients. It is essential to provide healthcare officers with adequate training in proper communication skills to facilitate the seamless handling of patients throughout the entire process (Alnaser, 2020). In medical interactions, communication encompasses both verbal and non-verbal components. In situations where these communication forms exhibit inconsistencies or contradictions, non-verbal cues tend to take precedence over verbal cues (Hall, 1995). This significant correlation between verbal and non-verbal communication is known to have important medical implications in healthcare and medical settings (Vogel, Meyer & Harendza, 2018) especially for public relations officers as mediators between healthcare providers among medical officers and Arab patients.

Arab culture is one of the richest and oldest cultures in the world. They are renowned for having distinctive and unique cultures that reflect their interactions and communication with others (Noman, 2019). In Arab society, distinctive cultural communication patterns associated with values, language, verbal communication, and non-verbal linguistic patterns exist (Feghali, 1997). Additionally, the communication culture in Arab society is significantly influenced by Islamic traditions, as Arabs are recognized as bearers of Islamic civilization and Islam holds a central position within Arab culture (Noman, 2019). The significance of Arabic communication cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in ensuring a comfortable hospital experience for Arab patients. Convenient and welcoming services including compassion and respect reflect customers' satisfaction toward the healthcare system provided at the hospitals (Alkhaled, Rohde, Lie & Johannessen, 2022). Good handling on communication aspects will be resulting mainly in preventing any misunderstandings between medical officers and patients concerning vital health information and provided treatments (Kuzemski, Thirlwall, Brunton & Brownie, 2021). Competent Arabic communication has the potential to influence the choice of healthcare centers or hospitals by Arab patients and consequently enhancing the quality of healthcare services delivered to Arab patients (Albougami, 2015).

Public relations, as defined by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA, 2012), encompasses a strategic form of communication that aims to cultivate mutually advantageous relationships between organizations and their clients. In this 4.0 era, public relation practitioners, commonly referred to as public relation officers within the healthcare sector, assume a significant responsibility in effectively overseeing the communication aspects. Part of the important roles played by public relation officers includes problem solvers and communication facilitators as they also serve as interpreters and mediators, aiming to eliminate any obstacles hindering effective communication (Utami & Alifiana, 2020). Public relations officers employ various communication channels to establish and maintain the positive reputation of healthcare centers by meeting clients' expectations as well as acquiring the quality of competency in the public relations context (Knight & Sweetser, 2021). This profession necessitates the acquisition of skills such as patient empathy, proficient communication, research skills, a holistic mindset, efficient time management, and creative thinking. The possession of these qualities significantly influences the image and reputation of their hospitals and healthcare centers (Khan, Khan & Naeem, 2021).

Language and communication are intricately interconnected, with language proficiency significantly influencing various aspects of effective communication (Chukwuemeka, 2022). Arabic language communication, in particular, possesses unique characteristics tailored for the specific needs of public relations officers who are dealing and assisting Arab patients at the hospitals. Within Arabic language communication, the dimension of language cannot be dissociated from culture, as the language serves as a reflection of the identity and collective experiences of the community or group utilizing it in their everyday communication. Furthermore, there exists a strong correlation between the language and the distinctive traits and behaviors exhibited by the community or group using that language (Rabiah, 2012).

Effective communication entails delivering the appropriate message to the intended receiver through the right channel and at the right time. Deviation from this principle gives rise to language barriers that hinder mutual comprehension or, in more severe cases, result in miscommunication that leads to misunderstandings, misinterpretations of messages, and dissemination of inaccurate information (Buarqoub, 2019). A crucial concern, particularly for healthcare providers especially public relations officers, revolves around effective communication with Arabic-speaking patients from different backgrounds, many of whom solely speak Arabic and have limited comprehension of other languages (Kuzemski et al., 2021). Due to the significant impact of their distinct cultural practices, there is a pressing need for the healthcare system to prioritize the resolution of language and communication barriers, with special emphasis on effective verbal and non-verbal communication with Arab patients (Albougami, 2015).

This issue poses a substantial challenge for public relations officers in healthcare centers and hospitals, limiting their capacity to adequately meet the requirements and expectations of Arab patients, consequently impeding the provision of comprehensive support throughout the entire service delivery process. Consequently, there is a critical imperative to address the needs of public relations officers by establishing a comprehensive framework for the Arabic

communication model as a valuable resource, guiding them in effectively navigating communication with Arab patients within the hospital setting.

## 2.0 Problem Statements

Mastering Arabic communication has its own challenges and problems due to the complexity and difficulty of the language (Oudeh, 2021). There are 2 main problems related to the problems of learning Arabic communication; internal problems and external problems. The internal problems are related to the limitations of knowledge and skills from the language user's own selves, while the external problems can be referred as the hindrance from the outside, for example the scarcity of supportive environment and the opportunity to speak or converse in Arabic. Previous study proved that non-native Arabic speakers face more internal problems than external problems in specific language-related problems, followed by lack of confidence and self-esteem (Haron et al., 2016).

In the public relations industry, public relations practitioners or officers have a bigger job scope to cover from the communication aspects until the management aspects to maintain a good reputation with the clients. A poor public relations services toward the clients will lead to a bad impression and reputations of that officers in specific and the organization or the institution as a whole, which at last will lead to a weak career movement in public relations (Almahraj, 2017). Public relations practitioners or officers who deal with Arab clients encounter major obstacles such as confusion and misconception of task, lack of professional manpower as well as cultural differences (Kirat, 2005) especially those among the non-native Arabic speakers. Handling Arab clients from the public relations perspectives requires strategic planning in many aspects of communication, language and public relations elements itself in order to align with current requirements and demands.

Arabic communication in public relations in the healthcare industry plays a major role in handling the increasing number of Arab patients coming to the healthcare centers seeking treatment. The rising language and communication barriers between healthcare providers and Arab patients necessitate the involvement of public relations officers as mediators, interpreters, or facilitators (Gerchow et al. 2022). In Malaysia, like any other non-Arab countries, or even Arab countries with most non-native Arabic residents such as UAE, public relations officers are among those of the non-native Arabic speakers, who has to take the responsibility to manage these Arab patients who are only able to speak or converse in Arabic (Al-Yateem et al., 2023).

The misconception and confusion of the task as well as lack of knowledge on Arabic communication and Arabic cultures proves that non-native Arabic speakers among public relations officers at healthcare centers need guidelines and framework to assist them during attending Arab patients. Well understanding job descriptions will optimize officers' readiness for the work and avoid unprecedented change (Budiani et al., 2023). Thus, this study aims at analyzing the needs of public relations officers at healthcare centers toward the development and implementation of a comprehensive Arabic communication model designed specifically for public relations officers in the healthcare industry.

## 3.0 Literature Review

Effective communication involves a strong bond between verbal and non-verbal communication. A good practice of communication skills at the workplace will undoubtedly contribute to the success of an organization or institution in achieving its goals and objectives. Organizational success is measured based on effective communication apart from succeeding from cooperation, creativity and productivity of work (Bahrain, Sakrani & Maidin, 2023). For verbal communication, study showed that messages transmitted verbally are around 65-70 percent, while only 30-35 percent of messages are transmitted nonverbally (Ismail et al., 2020). From this percentage, it is proven that both verbal and nonverbal communication excellence are inseparable and need to be well practiced by every individual at the workplace. The communication process that occurs at the workplace not only addresses the verbal message transmission from one individual to another, but also addresses the written aspect of the transmission (Oudeh, 2021). This means communication can not only be referred to as verbal communication through spoken aspects, and nonverbal through body languages, gestures and facial expressions, but also can be referred to as written aspect of communication in order to transfer messages at the workplace. All skills required in communication mastery are very much relatable to mastering the language itself as part of the requirements for excellent and effective communication.

Language and communication are two closely related components and they are in need of each other (Kim, 2020), even though these two components are very complex to be carried out by the employee or the officers at the workplace (Foster, 2019). Language has several roles in communication including proficiency and interactions in expressing and sharing one's assumptions, viewpoints and opinions with other people in social settings (Wilczewski

& Alon, 2022). A very effective language and communication at the workplace may foster more productivity, collaborations and understanding among every individual to facilitate communication skills in a dynamic and efficient working environment. On the other hand, a weak language proficiency will lead to a vague and ineffective communication in an organization or institution. Arabic language in specific, cultural components play a vital role in mastering communication. The quality process of communication has a very significant impact on how an individual adapts with any situation and absorbs the knowledge and skills around them (Din et al., 2024).

To fully understand the general Arabic communication, it is important to consider the cultural aspect of Arabic communication. This is because Arab culture possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from other cultures. Therefore, a comprehensive discussion of the main communication model should include Arab cultural factors. In Arab culture, there exists a prioritization of form over function, affect over accuracy, and image over meaning. Being cognizant of these cultural distinctions can assist non-native Arabic-speaking public relation officers in effectively engaging with Arabs. This understanding proves valuable in developing effective communication strategies and integrating the nuances of intercultural communication into their professional practices (Zaharna, 1995). Arabic communication as mentioned by Feghali (1997) encompasses three main themes: a) basic cultural values, b) language and verbal communication, and c) nonverbal and paralinguistic patterns.

The first theme as explained by Feghali (1997), basic cultural values, encompasses the principles of collectivism, hospitality, and honor. Collectivism highlights the significant emphasis placed on mutual interdependence, which greatly influences social interaction patterns among Arabs. Hospitality is not only a desirable personal trait but also symbolizes social status. Lastly, honor pertains to a governing value that legitimizes the family structure and establishes a code of modesty applicable to both men and women. The second theme is language and verbal communication. This theme focuses on the various forms of Arabic, codeswitching, and communicative style. The different forms of Arabic encompass classical Arabic, modern standard Arabic, and colloquial Arabic dialects. Code switching involves using borrowed words or phrases to convey specific meanings in bilingual contexts. Additionally, communicative style in Arab culture is characterized by repetition, indirectness, elaboration, and effectiveness, which serve as strategies for enhancing language communication. The final theme pertains to nonverbal and paralinguistic patterns, which includes overall models, gestures, eye contact, touch, interpersonal distance, and attitude toward time. Arab culture possesses distinctive characteristics in these nonverbal and paralinguistic aspects, regardless of the changes that have occurred in their communication within their own culture and with other cultures over time, even up to the present day.

Discussing the concept of public relations, this public relations mainly caters on the issues of managing relationships with stakeholders or clients to build trust and reputation between the organization or institution and the clients (MWUA, 2022). Public relations industry nowadays has evolved to meet international workforce expectations. Public relations practitioners in this rapid globalization and technological advancement should equip themselves with as many related skills to face career preparedness in the future (Abdullah & Ahmad, 2022). Professionalism among public relations practitioners plays an essential role to maintain good standards and quality management, knowledge and ethics. This value demands a trained public relations practitioner to deliver a high-quality service toward the clients (Kirat, 2016). In handling clients, crisis management in public relations is the key to sustain any organization or institution. A strategic planning of crisis communication in every aspect of public relations from the top to the bottom will consequently improve the service quality and welcome more strategic opportunities for the public relations industry (AlSaqr, 2018). Apart from that, exemplary ethics which are considered as a very important role to be played by public relations officers or practitioners also cover some other basic principles of ethics including unity, justice, benevolence and free that should be incorporated with the development of learning modules Taha, 2017).

For public relations at the healthcare centers, the public relations officers who are attending Arab patients need to consider translation and interpretation services when assisting medical officers or doctors during appointment, diagnosis, prescription and treatment (Alanazi, 2022). These two job scopes are crucial especially when Arab patients are only able to speak Arabic language, apart from other services they offer to the Arab patients. In addition, Arabic communication nowadays particularly in the public relations industry has emerged to a new horizon called visual communication through social media which emphasize on the aspects of Arab culture and global public relations practices (Al-Kandari et al., 2019). With these skills of visual communication, these public relations officers are expected to have experiences and skills in handling promotional and sharing slots through social media to attract more patients, especially Arab patients to come seeking treatment at their healthcare centers.

The Arabic communication model or framework for public relations officers in the healthcare centers seems to be one of the solutions for the issues regarding lack of interpreters or translators at the healthcare centers. Non-native

Arabic speakers among public relations officers are able to utilize this model or framework to get quick assistance in connecting Arab patients and healthcare providers or staff (Samsudin et al., 2022). At the same time, these services will be used independently among the public relations officers and to the highest extent this model will contribute to a high volume of Arab patients coming to the healthcare centers to seek for their best treatment offered at the centers. Thus, this research is conducted to analyze the need of the public relations officers at the healthcare centers toward the development and utilization of Arabic communication model designed specifically for them to help them attend Arab patients and assist healthcare providers among the administrative and medical officers, nurses and other related groups of individuals or departments.

#### 4.0 Methodology

This qualitative study utilized a semi-structured interview as the research instrument for data collection. The study aimed to investigate the needs of public relation officers working in five private healthcare centers and hospitals in Kuala Lumpur, namely KPJ Ampang Puteri, KPJ Tawakkal, ANNUR Specialist Hospital, PUSRAWI Hospital, and Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur. The selection of informants for this research was based on purposive sampling, with specific criteria set for the inclusion of public relation officers who interact with Arab patients and act as intermediaries between the hospital and patients throughout the entire process, including registration, consultation, treatment, and post-treatment. Purposive sampling method as proposed by Allen (1971) required establishing criteria to ensure the selection of qualified informants. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo data analysis software version 12. The question items were designed based on the three main components of the need's analysis theory by Hutchinson and Waters (1987): necessities, lacks, and wants. Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews, a content validity procedure was performed, involving three experts in the relevant field, to validate all the items.

#### 5.0 Result and Discussion

The analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with five public relation officers from different private hospitals has been conducted using Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) three key components of needs analysis: necessities, lacks, and wants. The issues and problems encountered by public relation officers exemplify the areas of lack, while their needs reflect the necessities and wants components in the development of a comprehensive Arabic communication model.

##### 5.1 Lacks

Lacks are referring to the issues and problems faced by public relation officers while conducting their duties. Apparently, three significant themes were recognized; lack of reference, uncooperative working atmosphere and language barrier.

##### 5.1.1 Lack of reference

- a. No clear guidelines in communication with Arab patients

Improper guidance will have a negative impact on the officer's performance as it may cause them to have self-doubt in conducting their service. Informant 1 reported;

*I feel unsatisfied when working without guidelines. Did I say it correctly to my patients? Even though I have studied beforehand.*

Major confusion by the officers can be avoided if they have clear guidelines covering all aspects of the hospital operations.

- b. Limited reference in medical terminologies

Public relation officers encounter challenges in gaining medical terminologies in English- Arabic or vice versa. They have limited source of reference in medical terminologies as reported by Informant 1, 3 and 4 as follows:

*Arabic medical books are only in Arabic, no translation available. Only few have translation in medical*

*terminologies.*

Informant 3 reported that she ordered her book from foreign country:

*It is hard for me to find a reference for my use while handling patients. I have to order it from overseas.*

While Informant 4 also complained the similar issue:

*The problem is we cannot find a specific dictionary in medical terminologies.*

### 5.1.2 Uncooperative working environment

Congenial hospital environment is imperative for the staff and patients. Uncooperative working atmosphere can profoundly affect the officer's performance and health outcomes of the patients.

#### a. Additional workload

An increased workload can lead to stress at work. Having duties outside of working hours is an example of extra workload ones must handle. Informant 2 expressed her circumstance:

*Sometimes, the emergency department needs my assistance after 5pm. If I can't assist them, I will give them an initiative by translating through the phone. I even received questions at 12 midnight occasionally. If it is after 9 pm, I will reply to them the next morning.*

#### b. Patient's attitude

In addition, it is reported that public relation officers often encounter patients' negative attitudes for example, always being late, hot tempered, impatient, demanding and adamant. These kinds of attitudes somehow affect the officers to carry out their duty. Informant 2 said:

*They are impatient, fussy and everything must be done quickly but they always come late. I am used to their behavior, so I need to understand and always find a solution not to make them angry. They are hot-tempered so I have to know how to please them.*

Informant 1 described:

*When they want something in a particular way, they will be eager to get it no matter how. They hate to wait and are adamant with their opinions.*

#### c. Misunderstanding among colleagues

Misconceptions are taking place when mutual respect is not being practiced. Public relation officers have the task to provide information needed by the public but other colleagues misinterpreted the mobile phone used during working. This kind of perception might affect their performance. Informant 1 explained:

*Sometimes, they always think that we do not have work to do, as we are regularly using the handphone. Whereas, it is our main platform to connect with our international patients via WhatsApp.*

### 5.1.3 Language barrier

Public relation officers experience many challenges in language barrier while communicating with both doctors and patients. These challenges range from difficulty in translating medical terminologies and unable to understand Arabic dialects.

#### a. Difficulties in translating medical terminologies

Skill in translating medical terminology is undoubtedly important for a public relation officer in conveying correct information from doctors to patients. However, informants expressed that they do not have medical background as stated by informant 1:

*There is a hindrance between officers and doctors as we do not have medical background. We have to ask the doctor to explain more before we can tell the patients.*

Informant 4 described how hard it is to translate medical terminology to Arabic language:  
Sometimes, I found it difficult to translate medical terminology used by the doctors to patients in Arabic language, so I used common Arabic.

b. Diverse Arabic dialects

Arab patients come from different Arab countries and each country has their own dialect and nuance. Informants reported that they faced difficulty in understanding patient's dialects. Informant 1 explained:

*We have to know every country's dialect. During my early stage of working here, I was unable to understand their language. It took me some time to finally grasp their dialects.*

Due to multiple Arabic dialects among patients, some unintelligible and others barely different, informant 2 expressed her concerns as follows;

*In some circumstances, I ask them to use modern Arabic language as an alternative if I cannot understand their dialect.*

Informant 4 also reported that this problem has been a great challenge for him;

*The biggest challenge in handling Arab patients is in understanding their dialect.*

## 5.2 Necessities

Necessities are referring to the needs of public relation officers toward developing a comprehensive Arabic communication model to be used at the healthcare center. There are several necessities for a public relations officer to deal with to conduct their work effectively. This theme emerged as three sub themes comprising public relation officer, communication skills and Arabic language skills.

### 5.2.1 Public relation officer

a. A proper and clear guideline

To manage healthcare services efficiently, health care providers should equip the public relation officer with a proper and clear guideline. This will help them to perform more tasks proactively. For instance, there are times where they need to deal with difficult patients as noted by informant 2:

*If there are impatient patients, I will tell them in advance that our hospital system is by appointment, first come first serve and not by time. This is to ensure that they have the picture. If the patient is too fussy, I will take a number ticket for them before they arrive so that they don't have to wait so long.*

b. Build and maintain good rapport.

Informants indicate that building rapport in a professional setting is part of their role. They also need to maintain good rapport with their patients. Informant 2 explained:

*We would build rapport by asking about their health and reminding them of their appointment date and follow up visits. Besides that, our hospital will organize an Iftar event yearly for our previous patients as a token of appreciation. From the event, we will keep in touch with each other. Sometimes, we get invitations from Arab embassies to attend their national day event. We would build rapport and make more connections at the event. We also send them cake on their national day.*

Moreover, satisfied patients who are treated with care and respect are more likely to return for their treatment at the same health provider as noted by informant 4:

*Patients will come again and continue their treatment if they feel comfortable. Majority of our patients here are repeat patients. But those who are not satisfied, they will not come again and that is our loss.*

- c. Having own list of medical terminologies.

By having their own list of medical terminologies, it helps public relation officers to conduct their job more efficiently. Informant 2 stated:

*For medical terminologies, I learnt a lot from dictionaries and sometimes from my patients. They are very helpful. They will explain to me in Arabic but in simpler sentences. I will jot down quickly in my phone for my notes and after that I will write it in my notebook to compile everything. This list of medical terminologies really helps me improve my knowledge.*

- d. Get to know with Arabic culture and practicing it.

Some informants stated that by getting to know Arabic culture and practicing it, the connection with the patients becomes stronger. Knowing familiar phrases and relevant expressions will help to keep the dialogue flowing. Informant 2 explained:

*They love to pray for us. It is their culture to pray for each other. They also love praises, so we have to praise them occasionally.*

Informant 3 said;

*Arab people always honor their guests. Sometimes, when I meet them, they are the ones who offer me the seat although they are the guests. But because I studied in an Arab country, I can understand their culture to honor guests. Besides that, it is very common to see Arab use phrases like 'may Allah bless you' or 'may He ease you' at the end of a conversation whether in speaking or writing.*

### 5.2.2 Communication skills

Good communication skills are crucial when dealing with patients to develop mutual trust and good understanding between both parties. It includes doing small talks, understanding and responding to a patient's non-verbal cues and online communication.

- . Do small talks.

Doing small talks are necessary to support a constructive relationship with patients. Officers who communicate nicely, warm, and attractively will attract patients to be more communicative and confiding. Informant 4 noted:

*Conversation with the patients is the way to build connections. When they come, we greet them, ask about their background and health. Usually, patients will be attracted to officers who can speak Arabic because there are not many. With the ability to speak Arabic, they will be more open.*

- b. Understand and respond to patient's facial expression and body language.

Public relation officers also must put patients at ease by understanding and responding to their facial expression and body language. Informant 2 said:

*Facial expression and body language are both important. We need to show how happy we are when they come. If they are angry, just smile. There is no point if we get mad too.*

Informant 3 explained her perspective:

*Besides speaking skills, body language is important too. At times when I am unable to find a word to describe, it is adequate to make gestures. I point my finger to the sick part of the body. I use bodily movements and facial expressions as a last resort when we both can't understand each other's language.*

- c. Online communication.



Public relation officer's role is not limited to dealing with patients during consultation. They also need to provide services including giving information online. Informant 2 noted:

*Most of the time, I communicate with my patients through WhatsApp. They ask me questions and send me their information details like full name, address and passport. They got my number from their friends. I also got inquiries through email from overseas asking questions such as how to get treatment here, how much the estimation cost and what are the services provided.*

### 5.2.3 Arabic language skills

To be a competent public relation officer, one must have Arabic language skills which covers acquiring basic Arabic skills, mastering standard Arabic and able to understand basic medical terminologies.

#### a. Acquire basic Arabic skills.

Similar to other languages, basic Arabic skills consist of four basic skills which are speaking, reading, listening and writing. Informant 1 noted the importance of acquiring all these skills, as follows:

*We have to be fully proficient in every aspect whether in speaking, listening, writing or reading. Sometimes patients ask through WhatsApp to talk about his sickness. We need to translate his disease and needs.*

While Informant 3 stresses the importance of speaking skill and followed by writing skill.

*The first important skill is speaking skill. Besides that, is writing skill. I have an experience where my patient asked me to write medication names and its prescription. There was also a pregnant lady who asked me how to take insulin. So, I wrote down the ways step by step. Someday, we will explain to patients not only in verbal but in writing too.*

#### b. Mastering standard Arabic.

Standard Arabic language is used by most Arab countries and it is understandable even if they do not practice it in their daily life. This skill is like the main utensil public officers must have to avoid trouble in translating messages to patients. Informant 3 described:

*As I am not able to speak Arabic dialect fluently, using standard Arabic is the option to deliver messages to my patients.*

For informant 2, she informed her patients about her inability to use Arabic dialect and found that they can accept it:

*Comparing standard Arabic and Arabic dialect, I am ineloquent in Arabic dialect. Therefore, I told my patients that I am only able to speak standard Arabic and they can accept and use it with me.*

#### c. Able to understand basic medical terminologies.

Public relation's capability must not be restricted to just mastering standard Arabic, but also able to at least understand basic medical terminologies. This is to ensure the officer can interpret the doctor's diagnosis and treatment options to the patient persuasively. Some patients are not familiar with the medical terminologies therefore, public relation officers must use familiar Arabic words that are equivalent to the medical terminologies. Informant 4 explained:

*For example, when we use medical terms like ventilator not everyone can understand it, especially those without medical background. It is easier for us to say 'machine to support breathing' for them to understand well.*

## 5.3 Wants

Wants are recognized as the additional components needed by PR to accomplish their necessities.

### 5.3.1 Conducting promotional program

Due to the limited number of public relation officers who are able to speak Arabic, hospitals can arrange customer friendly promotional programs to Arab communities. The aim is to promote the presence of public relation assistance to individuals who have limited or no proficiency in English. Informant 1 reported:

*We have a yearly event at KLCC named Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) to promote our hospital. It is an international event but we focus on Arab people.*

### 5.3.2 Cooperation with organizations and embassies

Cooperation with organizations and embassies by two hospitals studied, it is beneficial to both organizations and healthcare institutions to have good cooperation as a bridge for communities. Informant 1 mentioned:

*We need to cooperate with the embassy and international organizations. In many cases, they would recommend us to their people to get treatment here.*

From the above results, public relations officers encounter different difficulties such as lack of reference, uncooperative working environment and language barrier. Hence, the public relations officers need to equip themselves with three major skills specifically in public relations, communication and Arabic language to cater the problems in carrying out their duties. For these necessities, this research suggests a development of an Arabic communication model for public relations officers to fill these gaps as the model will provide clear guidelines related to all the elements needed as well as attached with the list of necessary vocabularies and phrases based on the situation at the healthcare centers to ease public relations officers to use them. In the meantime, conducting promotional programs and cooperation with organizations and embassies are such complementary elements in delivering the services.

## 6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, with the rise of the number of Arab patients coming to seek treatment at healthcare centers in Malaysia, public relations officers have shown their utmost need toward the implementation of proper and clear guidelines in order to equip them with the vast knowledge and skills required to provide high quality service despite of the challenges they face in handling Arab patients especially in Arabic communication. A comprehensive Arabic communication model or framework that is needed by the public relations officers in the healthcare industry should cover the process of Arabic language elements, communication as well as public relations iteratively. Thus, for future research, this study suggests broad research on the development and assessments on the major and subcomponents of the Arabic communication model pertaining to the needs of public relations officers in the healthcare industry.

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