

Harmonizing Innovation and Ethics: An Exploration of AI-Driven Public Relations Practice at Daystar University, Kenya

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Abstract

Research indicates that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay, with a blend of AI and human insight. AI is revolutionizing how organizations in Kenya engage with their audiences, offering tools for enhanced personalization, sentiment analysis, real-time responsiveness, and data-driven decision-making. However, this technological shift presents a critical challenge: maintaining engagement and authenticity. AI use raises pertinent ethical issues, including chatbots, disclosure of AI use in content creation, misinformation, algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, transparency, disinformation, and information security, all of which can erode trust between the organization and its publics. Guided by utilitarianism, this qualitative study explored the use of AI in the Public Relations Department at Daystar University (DU), one of Kenya's leading universities. Using a qualitative exploratory research design, the study conducted in-depth interviews with five purposively sampled professionals in the Corporate Affairs Department, where Public Relations is housed, and analyzed the data using content analysis. Qualitative content analysis of a chatbot was also conducted. Findings revealed that the DU PR department staff use AI tools individually, as no ethical framework exists to support the official use of AI. Tools include engagement, content creation, email-related, chatbots, and meeting management tools. The staff derives benefits like refined writing, better event coordination, and easier stakeholder engagement, among others. However, ethical challenges exist, such as plagiarism, misinformation, unsupported ideas, a lack of a human interface, and bias. Because AI offers many significant benefits, it is imperative that PR units develop ethical frameworks and organize training for their employees.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Public Relations, Public Relations Practice, Ethics, Authenticity, Engagement*

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a 21st-century revolutionary technology used in virtually all fields, such as healthcare, security, transportation, agriculture, and communication. Stryker and Kavlakoglu (n.d.) define it as a 'technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity, and autonomy.' The literature documents the advantages and disadvantages of AI use, even in Public Relations (PR). According to Ewing (2023), AI is a valuable asset for modern PR because of its capabilities in large-scale data analysis, message personalization, and enhanced response efficiency. However,

the increasing use of AI in PR poses major ethical challenges that organizations must address to establish responsible yet transparent PR operations.

AI is being applied in PR for content creation and optimization, chatbots and customer engagement, predictive analytics, sentiment analysis and media monitoring, crisis management, and influencer identification (Singh, 2026). Further, Renckens (2023) states that while AI is useful for ideation, research, and content creation, utmost care must be taken when using it. In a survey of communication leaders, USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations found that AI is important to the future of public relations and the communications industry (Renckens, 2023).

While the literature records both the pros and cons of AI, it is Ve İlişkiler and Ve Zararlar (2024) who see the communication profession's future as a blend between AI and human insight. AI may be intrusive with negative consequences, but its future seems assured. After all, Sustainable Development Goal nine aims to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation, which in our study, is AI. Thus, we studied the use of AI in Daystar University's PR department. Daystar University (DU) is a private, faith-based organization based in Athi River, Kenya, and which operates seven Schools. The PR Department, also known as Corporate Affairs, has five employees. Our objectives included identifying the AI tools used and whether a robust ethical framework existed; assessing the benefits derived from AI use by the PR department; and understanding the AI-related ethical challenges experienced by DU's PR professionals.

Literature Review

AI is increasingly being used in various sectors. Alves et al. (2024) study decision-making in hospital settings and report on managers' optimism and skepticism regarding AI; they acknowledge its potential to improve efficiency and decision-making but are concerned about the loss of human empathy, data privacy, and broader ethical issues. Luca (2023) posits that companies can anticipate customer needs and improve decision-making through AI-driven predictive analytics, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Likewise, Knuuttila (2024) notes the transformative benefits for marketers that ChatGPT offers, as it enables greater efficiency, customer engagement, and enhanced creativity. Nevertheless, ChatGPT presents

ethical dilemmas, data privacy concerns, and challenges in maintaining content quality. Kumar et al. (2023) also studied ChatGPT's integration into brand marketing strategies and found that the tool carries the transformative potential to streamline interactions, introduce innovative campaigns, and enhance customer experiences.

According to Nkembuh (2024), audience connection is readily achieved through AI-powered personalization, which also greatly enhances communication effectiveness but poses critical ethical challenges. To address ethical challenges, Mazingue (2023) proposes a framework for the ethical implementation of AI in strategic communications. More literature is available through Luca (2023), who notes that modern-day customer service has been revolutionized by AI, which has automated routine interactions, thereby enhancing customer engagement and improving response times. The author observes that businesses can provide personalized, efficient, and scalable support via AI-driven virtual assistants, chatbots, sentiment analysis, and natural language processing.

Rane et al. (2024) postulate that machine learning and AI are highly useful for sentiment analysis, enabling businesses to gain deep insights into customer preferences, behavior, and feedback, leading to more personalized and engaging customer experiences. However, the use and spread of disinformation can negatively impact organizations, damaging their reputations. Besides, ethical issues occasioned by the collection of cookies can lead to reputational damage (Rane et al., 2024). Ve İlişkiler and Ve Zararlar (2024) summarize the risks involved in the organizational use of AI: damage from propaganda and bias introduced by AI in decision-making processes, calling into question the validity of organizational decisions.

AI is also plagued by bias through its algorithmic system. For instance, AI sentiment tools that analyze audience emotions fail to correctly interpret cultural expressions, slang, and dialect patterns, thereby misidentifying emotional feedback (Bourne, 2019). AI-powered media monitoring tools tend to focus on major voices within public dialogue, yet ignore minority groups in the population.

There is a danger that AI will spread false information, which confuses users. Tools like chatbots with automated news generators and deepfake technologies can create false information, leading

to serious reputational losses for organizations and individuals (Adu, 2024). The training process of AI models using incomplete datasets and biased inputs results in fabricated text output, which unintentionally leads to the propagation of misinformation (Adu, 2024).

The PR scene is increasingly recording Afrocentric studies on AI. For instance, Nigeria's adoption of AI in PR departments is still in its nascent stages, although AI use is gaining momentum, particularly in media monitoring and sentiment analysis (Eke & Adeyemi, 2024; Oduenyi & Williams, 2024). On the other end of the spectrum are Ghanaian professionals with limited knowledge of AI despite understanding the concept (Anani-Bossman et al., 2024). In Kenya, despite a genuine interest in AI, PR professionals have yet to fully exploit it (Karanja, 2025). Further, AI policy development for effective PR use is still in its infancy, largely hampered by limited understanding of AI, skills shortages, funding constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of access to data (Ing et al., 2026).

This study is guided by utilitarianism, a moral philosophy proposed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, which focuses on maximizing overall happiness while minimizing harm (Mill, 2016). According to utilitarianism, an action that produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people is ethical, while actions that harm fewer people and benefit more people are deemed morally correct (Abumere, 2019). The theory considers the betterment of society at large. However, while AI is lauded for its 'good' towards humanity, Roff (2020) questions whether the notion of utilitarianism in AI is sound.

While the literature has documented the benefits and challenges of AI use in PR, gaps remain in how PR departments or units leverage AI to improve efficiency while maintaining ethical use, particularly in Africa. Studies focusing on higher education PR practice, AI use, and conducted through the lens of utilitarianism are even rarer, hence the current study.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which focuses on exploring meanings, experiences, and perceptions in depth rather than measuring variables statistically (Muurlink & Thomsen, 2024). Specifically, we used a qualitative exploratory research design, which is used

when a problem is not clearly defined or the topic lacks an established theory. Qualitative in-depth interviews were used, and, as Creswell (2014) notes, they help the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. We used semi-structured, open-ended questions to gain depth from the participants' unfiltered opinions and views (Creswell, 2014). Besides, we qualitatively analyzed Daystar's chatbot use. This is an epistemological alignment aimed at mapping the depth of human experience and perception with the chatbot, rather than measuring its technical performance metrics.

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method that deliberately selects participants with specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic (Tajik et al., 2025). In this study, five participants were selected because they were employees of Daystar University's Public Relations department and had knowledge and/or experience with AI tools in communication practice. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research because it enables the selection of information-rich cases that can provide deep insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024).

Qualitative research approaches typically rely on predetermined numerical guidelines, often recommending sample sizes of about 5 to 30 participants within each group (Guest et al., 2006). There are no rigid guidelines for determining an appropriate sample size in a qualitative inquiry. Such studies often focus on a single participant selected for their capacity to provide rich, in-depth insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Haydon & van der Riet, 2014; Moen, 2006). The decision to interview five staff members from the PR Department at Daystar University aligns with the principles of qualitative research, which focuses on capturing detailed, lived experiences of individuals, so that even one or two interviewees are enough to generate data (Bekele & Ago, 2022). Given that the research aimed to explore practical experiences rather than statistical representation, interviewing five PR professionals was both methodologically appropriate and sufficient for meaningful insights.

Data was analyzed through content analysis. Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d) explain that qualitative content analysis examines manifest or latent meanings, themes, and patterns in a particular text, allowing researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner. This method

emphasizes an integrated view of text or speech and their specific contexts. In line with qualitative content analysis, we prepared the data, defined the unit of analysis, developed categories and coding schemes, tested the coding scheme, coded all the text, assessed our coding consistency, and drew conclusions from the coded data, as espoused by Zhang and Wildemuthe (n.d.). Additionally, we analyzed DU's website and Facebook page to gain insight into how DU's PR department uses AI.

Daystar University was selected because it is one of the leading universities in training communication students. Besides, the University offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in public relations and corporate communication. Ethical considerations included assurances of confidentiality, the signing and return of informed consent forms, and a guarantee that study findings were for academic purposes only.

Results

The study sought to explore the use of AI in DU's PR department. Specific details were sought through the following questions: AI tools currently in use for PR; How AI has transformed PR activities; Areas where AI has fallen short in PR applications; Whether an official ethical framework for AI use in PR exists; Whether PR professionals at the university are trained on AI ethics; Any ethical dilemmas encountered when using AI in PR; and measures that should be taken to address AI-related ethical concerns in PR. The results are presented below as a rich, thick description that represents the participants' qualitative perspectives and aligns with the research objectives. The informants are cited as KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-4, and KI-5.

AI Tools in Use at Daystar University and Ethical Framework

The informants divulged the existence of the following tools at DU:

Engagement Tools

Google Meet and Zoom are the most commonly used AI tools within the PR department. These tools are useful for streamlining communication and engaging with stakeholders. The informants opined that while these two are not AI per se, they have an in-built AI agent like Companion that can gauge a meeting's emotional tone, generate summaries, create virtual backgrounds, and even identify who spoke the most. They were unanimous that Google Meet and Zoom have made

meetings, training, PR event planning, and stakeholder engagements easier and faster than traditional face-to-face engagements.

DU's PR staff also uses Microsoft Teams for meetings, with the app supporting internal PR communication, collaboration, and coordination among different university departments. As with Zoom and Google Meet, the intelligent recap and meeting summaries built into the app have provided staff with AI-generated summaries, action items, and key points from meetings, which they call revolutionary because they save them valuable time they can use for other work.

Content Creation Tools

The informants identified Grammarly, an AI-powered writing assistant that DU PR staff use to facilitate and clarify their writing. This AI writing assistant uses an AI algorithm that has helped them develop professionalism and clarity when generating PR materials, including emails, reports, and newsletters. The tool further refines punctuation, grammar, style, syntax, and tone.

Let's face it. Not all of us have an inborn command of English, and some of us struggled with English grammar in high school. Personally, I struggle with spelling, so if there is a tool to help me perfect my work, why not? Previously, I would flip through the dictionary, but not anymore. (KI-4)

KI-1 was categorical that the University is not officially using AI and postulated that AI use is individual-based. According to KI-1, individuals use AI to help them fulfill their PR tasks. For example, ChatGPT helps in generating ideas, interview questions, and captions (for posters), which they then tweak to suit the occasion. KI-1 opines that AI has enabled employees to work faster and refine their writing. The perspectives below capture the usefulness of AI tools as told by the participants:

I know about AI and plagiarism, but I must say I have found ChatGPT extremely useful. The tool tends to summarize points, so I use them as ideas. For instance, when writing a proposal that requires a theory, I ask it, and it gives me a list of theories. I then select one and read about that theory from credible sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and university websites. (KI-1)

We are using tools like ChatGPT to help draft press releases and social media posts. We also use a social media scheduler- you know, those apps that help to schedule

posts on a specific timeline. Besides, Corporate Affairs is using Google Analytics to help with predictive capabilities. So, the use of these automated translation tools and probably AI-driven email marketing systems is helping in engagement and personalization of messages to the community as well. (KI-3)

I use Gemini a lot for my PR research. I find the tool incredibly useful in generating research ideas and methodology. For instance, I can ask it to suggest which method is most suitable between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and it does. I, however, am very cautious not to be caught in the vice of plagiarism. (KI-2)

Another tool identified by the informants is the Hemingway app, which some use to refine their writing, particularly in sentence construction. The app helps simplify dense, complicated, or convoluted sentences to help the reader not get lost, as buttressed by KI-5:

After I have completed my press release, newsletter, annual report, name it, I run it through Hemingway App before using Grammarly. The app is awesome- I mean it suggests rewrites, which truly make sense, more than what I had written previously. (KI-5)

Email-related AI Tools

Informants also identified email responses and email assistants, such as AI tools that automate email replies when staff are on leave. These tools provide personalised communication with stakeholders, and have helped to manage high volumes of inquiries efficiently. Email assistants manage and compose emails by automating tasks such as summarizing content, suggesting responses, and prioritizing messages. They also help the staff to generate draft responses based on the context of the email they receive.

Whenever I am on leave, I set my email on Outlook to politely alert the sender that I am away and that my colleague-whose details I share on the same email-will assist them while I am away. You see, this type of assistance by AI helps the University close a gap that would have been created if the sender had anticipated an urgent, critical response. (KI-2)

Chatbots

The informants are aware that the web developer for the DU website has automated chatbots, which help respond to queries particularly by those seeking information during non-working hours.

One informant revealed that Chatbots, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Machine Learning (ML) are used to simulate human-like conversations and automate interactions. KI-4 had this to say:

The average response time is four hours during the day time and 48 hours during the weekends and holidays. Chatbots fill gaps we cannot occupy during our sleep time. The person inquiring about what courses we offer from a different time zone receives an immediate answer, and even though it is insufficient, they hold on to it until a comprehensive answer can be found. (KI-4)

We evaluated the use of a chatbot on the DU website <https://www.daystar.ac.ke/>, which links the inquirer to a WhatsApp number. On 22nd February 2025, one of us texted the following on the WhatsApp number: “Hello. I need your help.” Since 22nd February 2025 was a Saturday, the chatbot responded on Monday, 24th February 2025 at 8.27 am, signifying that a human hand was necessary to complete the communication. The researcher then posted the following: “Please provide information about a PhD in Communication,” at 8.50 am on the same Monday, and the PR official now responded at 9.15 am with posters and flyers concerning the program alongside this message: “Please see the brochure below for course requirements and the fee structure.” She/he also gave the following response: “PhD programs are online. Classes are scheduled from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm on weekdays and from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm on Saturdays. Your schedule depends on the units you register for each semester.” The researcher still had the following query: “Thank you. Do you have a breakdown of the PhD course? We would appreciate it.” The response was, “You can get the breakdown of units from the School of Communication. Please reach out to J... or I..... via 070XXXXXX.”

One researcher also visited the DU Facebook page on 11th July 2025 and typed the following: “Hello Daystar University. I have an inquiry,” at 12.12 pm, upon which the chatbot instantly responded: “Hi, thanks for contacting us. We've received your message and appreciate your getting in touch.” We then responded with the question: “Do you offer a Diploma in Nursing?” 12 hours later, and past working hours, we had not received a response. Thus, we concluded that the Facebook page is not being attended to, unlike the WhatsApp chatbot linked on the website.

Meeting Management Tools

Informants shared that meeting management tools are AI-driven and help in coordinating meetings for the PR teams and busy university executives, which reduces the administrative workload. This tool helps to alert staff of any pre-arranged meetings early in advance, which in turn helps to ensure better preparation, minimize scheduling conflicts, suggest optimal meeting times, and send automated reminders.

We are a very busy office especially since we have events running across all the schools, and the university as a whole. Because one can forget that one has a meeting, we set reminders on Outlook and Microsoft Teams. I prefer to customize the message and set a reminder time. This way, no one can ever say they forgot.
(KI-1)

Benefits of AI Tools to PR Practice at DU

The informants opined that the above-mentioned AI tools significantly enhanced the efficiency of PR teams within the university by optimizing various functions. One such function is the use of chatbots, which serve as a brief for the PR communicator when time zones differ. Tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Grammarly, and the Hemingway app have helped in enhancing quality in writing the DU newsletter, *Infospot*, emails, and social media posts. Even the annual university magazine released during convocation benefits immensely from AI tools as revealed in the following perspective:

AI is one of those pleasant innovations you want to hold close to your chest. *Daystar Connect* is a magazine that requires close attention, as it will be shared with guests attending the graduation ceremony in November. AI has come in handy for detecting plagiarism, addressing irresponsible use of AI, and polishing the language and sentences in articles. Previously, it was a tedious task of reading and re-reading stuff in a manual editing and sub-editing engagement. (KI-4)

Besides AI benefits for writing engagements, the informants also reported that the tool offers many other advantages. For instance, they agreed that their events are now better-coordinated through the use of AI-driven scheduling tools. Moreover, automated email assistants and chatbots have made stakeholder engagement easier and faster through responses to inquiries from prospective students, alumni, and other publics in real-time. Since the chatbots handle frequently asked

questions, the university benefits through quick responses about admissions, events, or policies. The AI-powered email assistants are a game-changer in the university's PR, especially for managing high email traffic efficiently.

I would say artificial intelligence on its own is a blessing. First, content creation is now streamlined. It has enhanced audience engagement from the personalised messages we put across. And of course, it gives real time feedback on public sentiments. And we've seen those interactions every other day when posts are made on social media. (KI-3)

I usually say that we are moving from an era of the Internet to Evernet. So if you do not move with the wave, you will be left behind. We must adopt AI tools in PR and especially since DU remains committed to technology use to enhance and not dilute the university's mission and vision. (KI-5)

The informants were of the view that DU has recognized the value of responsible AI use and has therefore conducted several webinars on AI. The goal of these trainings is to ensure that all staff are aware of AI and its responsible and irresponsible uses.

There have been several webinars. I attended one last month where we discussed what AI is and how we can leverage it in our work. We also learned about the irresponsible use of AI. (KI-2)

DU will host an international conference on AI in 2026. Perhaps this is a pointer to the seriousness around AI by the university that is starting to build up. Beyond this, I think the university ought to make AI an agenda item and institute formal training to assist us in line with AI technology. (KI-5)

And seeing that even our VC is at the forefront, trying to make sure that everyone joins the AI bandwagon. It is important that leadership recognizes the value of AI, as it is the future. (KI-1)

All the informants confirmed that the DU PR department does not have an ethical framework in place for AI use. Consequently, no AI training for PR professionals has taken place. Individuals use AI for PR-related functions, thus bearing individual responsibility for its use.

I don't think our university has a standalone official ethical framework, especially for AI in PR. However, I know the university has policies on digital ethics and probably communication integrity. The policies emphasize transparency, data privacy, and responsible content creation. (KI-4)

We do not have an AI policy in place, but from what I have seen, there is a general understanding in the department that we should disclose our use of AI. Since DU is working on the strategic plan for the next five years, I am sure AI has been factored in. (KI-3)

The informants suggested that they require an ethical framework and training, as the world is digital, and that they need to align with global PR trends while enhancing their work. Training PR professionals is one way to address ethical dilemmas workers may encounter. The informants suggested that AI training at the university should not only be limited to PR professionals, but also to all workers. Concerning AI policy, they thought that it should be formulated for both the academic and administrative wings of the university.

I think Daystar University can achieve this balance by first establishing a policy framework to guide the ethical use of AI. The University should invest in its staff through capacity building whose aim is to build a culture of transparency in digital communication. (KI-2)

Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

Inasmuch as the informants praised AI for its usefulness and efficacy, they also expressed concern about the challenges its use presents. According to KI-1, AI comes with several weaknesses among them plagiarism, misinformation, and unsupported ideas. One cannot tell the legitimacy or credibility of the information, thus should be cautious when using AI.

Another informant had concerns about the lack of human interaction in AI use as noted below:

I must admit that it comes with its challenges as well. We know that sometimes the AI-generated messages we release lack a human interface. I mean the tool depends on the prompts we give it. So, it can't really run on its own. It's not as autonomous as it sounds. (KI-5)

The participants also pointed out that ChatGPT does not help much when they are looking for information specific to their context, for instance indigenous information.

I was writing an article about Kikuyu artefacts and I was not surprised that ChatGPT did not have exactly what I wanted. It guessed a lot of stuff, which of course was not true. (KI-3)

Discussion

The study sought to find out the AI tools being used at DU and if a robust ethical framework exists; assess the benefits of AI tools on PR practice at DU; and understand AI-related ethical challenges experienced by DU's PR professionals.

Regarding the tools in use at the PR department, the study found that the university used engagement/virtual communication platforms, content creation tools, email-related tools, chatbots, and meeting management tools. Such tools include Zoom, Google Meet, Grammarly, Hemmingway App, Outlook, Google Analytics among others. Integrating AI-powered tools in DU's PR department demonstrates how technology is reshaping communication, content creation and stakeholder engagement within academic institutions. AI tools streamline PR operations, ensuring efficiency, professionalism and timely responses to inquiries (Jeong & Park, 2023). Nevertheless, tools like chatbots should be handled with care because of the potential to generate false information leading to a serious loss in loss of reputation for an organization, as postulated by (Adu, 2024).

From a utilitarian perspective, the use of AI tools can be justified because they maximize benefits for the greatest number of stakeholders (McGee, 2024). The tools improve communication efficiency, reduce delays and enhance stakeholder satisfaction among students, staff, alumni, and external publics. These findings support Katsikeas et al (2023) assertion that AI tools promote creativity, efficiency, and improved stakeholder engagement.

The participants pointed out the immense benefit they obtain from content creation tools. These tools enhance the quality of PR materials, including formal and informal reports, emails, memos, magazines, and newsletters. The tools help maintain professionalism and clarity in communication. This is particularly important in an academic environment where credibility and precision are key. Further, virtual communication platforms play a crucial role in facilitating trainings, virtual briefings, event planning, and stakeholder meetings. These ensure seamless interactions among university departments and external stakeholders, and as Alves et al. (2024), Knuuttila (2024), Kumar et al. (2023), and Luca (2023) note, AI tools carry transformative benefits as they enable customer engagement, and enhanced creativity and efficiency.

Meeting management tools play a pivotal role in scheduling and coordinating meetings for PR teams and university executives. The tools help to minimize scheduling conflicts and enhance preparation, ultimately improving overall efficiency. A tool like Microsoft Teams supports internal PR functions by enabling real-time communication, task management, and collaboration. The AI-generated intelligent recap and meeting summaries ensure that staff remain informed on key discussions, action items, and follow-up tasks, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication. These findings are supported by Eke & Adeyemi (2024), Luca (2023), and Oduenyi & Williams (2024).

Email response automation and AI-driven chatbots improve stakeholder engagement by efficiently managing high volumes of inquiries. These tools offer personalized communication, automated responses when staff are unavailable, and 24/7 support for frequently asked questions related to admissions, policies, and events. The AI chatbots, in particular, provide real-time support during working hours, with an average response time of four hours on weekdays and 48 hours during weekends and holidays. These findings are in line with Eke & Adeyemi (2024), Ewing (2023), Karanja (2025), and Oduenyi & Williams (2024), who view AI as a valuable asset in modern PR due to its capabilities for message personalization and enhanced response efficiency.

In the context of AI-driven PR tools in universities, utilitarianism can be applied to maximize efficiency and productivity, as these tools enhance PR teams' ability to manage communications,

stakeholder engagement, and event coordination. This improves overall satisfaction among students, faculty, and external stakeholders, aligning with the utilitarian goal of maximizing benefits for the greatest number of people. The utilitarian theoretical lens also suggests that these tools help reduce the administrative burden by automating repetitive tasks such as scheduling meetings and managing email inquiries. AI tools free up PR staff to focus on strategic planning, benefiting both employees (by reducing workload stress) and stakeholders (by improving response times and communication quality).

The use of AI tools, as seen through the lens of utilitarianism, promotes fairness and accessibility by enabling AI chatbots that provide 24/7 assistance, ensuring that inquiries from students, prospective applicants, and alumni are addressed promptly. This creates a more inclusive communication system in which support is not limited to office hours. Further, AI tools like Grammarly and Hemingway help minimize errors and miscommunication by improving the accuracy of PR materials and reducing miscommunication that could harm the university's reputation.

However, the participants also pointed out the challenges they face when using AI. These challenges mostly pertain to ethics, including the occasional failure to disclose AI use, plagiarism, bias, and poor writing stemming from AI's repetitive nature. Ve İlişkiler and Ve Zararlar (2024) agree that there are risks involved when organizations use AI, such as the spread of propaganda and bias in the decision-making process. The public may call into question the validity of decisions made by organizations that use/depend on AI. These authors and the study are supported by Bourne (2019), Ing et al. (2026), and Rane et al. (2024).

While AI does indeed present ethical challenges, the communication profession cannot overlook the future of the field as a blend of AI and human insight, as shown by İlişkiler et al. (2022). To achieve ethical balance, given that AI is here despite its challenges, authors such as Mazingue (2023) have proposed a framework for ethical AI implementation in strategic communications. In effect, organizations should note that AI has disrupted normal operations, and one way to maintain equilibrium is to develop ethical frameworks to encourage responsible use of AI. Nevertheless, Bourne and Jackson (2025) contend that ethics is not given sufficient consideration in PR; rather,

PR as a discipline must critically engage with and facilitate debates on AI and social justice. The authors believe that PR discussions around AI must also consider vulnerable populations in a fully functioning society.

Conclusion

The consensus is that AI is a valuable innovation when used well within established guidelines. While AI has the potential to automate routine PR tasks, human creativity, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence remain irreplaceable. The study found that the DU PR department staff use AI tools individually, as no ethical framework exists to support the official use of AI. Individuals have found that AI can assist them with specific PR tasks such as content creation, meeting scheduling, stakeholder engagement, and more. They thus use tools to help refine their writing, cut back on time spent manually writing content, and improve on efficiency. However, ethical challenges exist, such as plagiarism, misinformation, unsupported ideas, a lack of a human interface, and bias. Because AI offers many significant benefits, it is imperative that PR units develop ethical frameworks and organize training for their employees to leverage these tools while maintaining ethical practice.

Recommendations/Future Research

The following are the study recommendations:

1. The University and other academic organizations should establish clear policies, guidelines, and frameworks that govern AI applications. This way, the university will have struck a balance between ethics and technology. Each department (such as PR) and school in a university should develop an AI ethical framework to guide the responsible use of AI. This framework should outline the acceptable use of AI tools, emphasizing their role in enhancing efficiency while maintaining human oversight. Clear protocols should be established to define how AI is integrated into daily operations, ensuring that automation supports rather than replaces critical decision-making processes. In addition to guidelines, the framework should include continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the ethical impact of AI applications. Regular audits, feedback sessions, and risk assessments will help identify potential concerns.

2. All the staff in PR departments of universities should be trained on AI ethics to reduce ethical dilemmas. Training can emphasize that AI tools are used to assist rather than replace human judgment. Ethical considerations should always be factored into any PR-related decision. The trainees should understand that AI is used to enhance efficiency, but final PR decisions remain human-led to prevent ethical conflicts.

3. Measures that should be taken to address AI-related ethical concerns at the university include training all staff on AI and Ethics, not just those in PR. This will ensure that AI use is guided by a holistic approach and synergy.

Future research could assess AI use across Daystar University, including staff, faculty, and students. It would also be interesting to compare and contrast AI use among universities. These are institutions that direct learning, hence, should be on top of things.

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