

# Strategic Approaches of Non-Governmental Organizations in Combating Internet Addiction\*

## İnternet Bağımlılığıyla Mücadelede Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının Stratejik Yaklaşımları



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### Abstract

This study examines the public relations practices adopted by NGOs in combating internet addiction. The research analyzes the activity reports of five NGOs selected from three different continents, covering the years 2019–2023, using a descriptive analysis method. Criteria such as recognition, scope of influence, international collaborations, innovative practices, and the size of the audience reached were taken into account in the sample selection process. The data were analyzed using the MAXQDA. The public relations strategies used by NGOs in their efforts against internet addiction were examined under six main categories: communication strategies, public relations models, functions, types, campaign tools, and the public relations mix. The results reveal that NGOs adopt digital, proactive, and corporate social responsibility-based communication strategies in addressing internet addiction. Furthermore, tools such as media outreach, event organization, and public engagement activities were found to be effective in terms of visibility and reputation management. Through these strategies, NGOs are able to reach broader audiences and increase their societal impact. This study demonstrates that the strategic communication practices of NGOs serve as a significant instrument in combating internet addiction.

**Keywords:** NGOs, Internet Addiction, Public Relations, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Strategies.

### Öz

Bu çalışma, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının (STK) internet bağımlılığıyla mücadelede benimsedikleri halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarını incelemektedir. Araştırmada, üç farklı kıtadan seçilen beş STK'nın 2019–2023 yıllarını kapsayan faaliyet raporları, betimsel analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Örneklem seçiminde bilinirlik, etki alanı, uluslararası iş birlikleri, yenilikçi uygulamalar ve erişilen kitle büyüklüğü gibi ölçütler dikkate alınmıştır. Veriler, MAXQDA programı kullanılarak sistematik bir biçimde analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, STK'ların bağımlılıkla mücadelede kullandıkları halkla ilişkiler stratejileri altı ana başlık altında incelenmiştir: iletişim stratejileri, halkla ilişkiler modelleri, işlevleri, türleri, kampanya araçları ve halkla ilişkiler karması. Bulgular, STK'ların internet bağımlılığıyla mücadelede dijital, proaktif ve kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk temelli iletişim stratejileri benimsediklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca medya çalışmaları, etkinlik organizasyonları ve kamuoyu faaliyetleri gibi araçların görünürlük ve itibar yönetimi açısından etkili olduğu belirlenmiştir. STK'lar, bu stratejiler aracılığıyla daha geniş kitlelere ulaşmakta ve toplumsal etkilerini artırmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, STK'ların stratejik iletişim pratiklerinin internet bağımlılığıyla mücadelede önemli bir araç olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** STK, İnternet Bağımlılığı, Halkla İlişkiler, İletişim Stratejileri, Halkla İlişkiler Stratejileri.

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## Introduction

The prevalence of internet addiction varies across regions and has been steadily increasing worldwide, maintaining its relevance as a critical issue. Beyond individual consequences, internet addiction negatively impacts social life by creating a foundation for various societal problems. It not only causes significant material and emotional harm but also contributes to notable increases in crime rates (Bozkanat, 2020). Gökğöz and Koçoğlu (2007) highlight several key factors driving internet addiction, including family conflicts, association with groups displaying negative behaviors, lack of social communication, poor peer influences, and exposure to digital environments. Additionally, dissatisfaction with life, seeking happiness in alternative settings, and facing adverse economic and social conditions can push individuals toward internet addiction (Kol & Topgul, 2022).

Internet addiction leads to serious physical and mental health issues as well as social problems. This condition, which requires an effective treatment process, poses a significant barrier to reintegrating young people, children, and adults into society (Dağlı, 2019). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide social and psychological support to individuals struggling with internet addiction through motivational interviews, counseling, and rehabilitation programs in various fields. Those affected by internet addiction harm not only themselves but also every segment of society (Musai & Darkesh, 2014). Therefore, NGOs must develop effective programs and strategies to combat this type of addiction and ensure that individuals affected by it receive high-quality care, as internet addiction negatively impacts both individual and societal living conditions.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) establish rehabilitation and treatment centers specifically for children and young individuals dealing with technology or substance addiction. These centers aim to address the educational, physical, emotional, and mental needs of children and adolescents struggling with internet addiction, helping them reintegrate into society and reconnect with their communities (Throuvala et al., 2021). Ensuring access to rehabilitation services for individuals facing addiction, altering their tendencies toward technology, substances, and the internet, and providing them with social and psychological support are among the core objectives of NGOs operating in this field. Furthermore, these organizations focus on developing preventive and protective measures for children, adults, and young people, particularly those at risk, to raise societal awareness about addiction (Ari, 2022).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in preventing internet addiction by helping individuals adopt healthy lifestyles and behaviors while building resilience against social and psychological challenges. In this regard, NGOs offer preventive and protective psychological and social support services to reduce or eliminate addiction (Gündüz & Kaya, 2014). Within the framework of programs aimed at preventing technology, substance, and internet addiction, NGOs take on significant responsibilities. These include curbing excessive use of technology and the internet, sharing critical information about harmful content, raising awareness about avoiding such products, and implementing measures to address substances that could lead to severe negative consequences (Aslan & Yilmaz, 2017).

This study aims to analyze the strategies developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in combating internet addiction from a public relations perspective. And, it focuses on countries from three major continents: Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The sample includes the United States, India, the United Kingdom, and Türkiye. Key

organizations selected for the research are Irex from the United States, DEF from India, ORG and APC from the United Kingdom, and The Green Crescent from Türkiye. Also this study examines the activities of five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) combating internet addiction across different continents from 2019 to 2023. The research analyzes their areas of influence, innovative methods, international collaborations, and network structures from a public relations perspective. The organizations under review are IREX from the United States, DEF from India, ORG and APC from the United Kingdom, and The Green Crescent from Türkiye. In this context, the applicability of the innovative methods adopted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Türkiye to combat internet addiction and the sustainability of their transformative impact on societal structures are of significant importance. The innovative initiatives undertaken by NGOs in Türkiye have been examined within the framework of social innovation, public awareness, and impact-driven projects, and their potential contributions to the overall welfare of society have been discussed. A comprehensive analysis has been conducted on the strategies employed by Turkish NGOs to address internet addiction, focusing on their effectiveness and sustainability. In light of these topics, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- Q1. What communication strategies do NGOs adopt, and what are the reasons behind their selection?
- Q2. Which public relations functions do NGOs prioritize?
- Q3. What types of public relations are preferred by NGOs?
- Q4. What public relations campaign tools are used by NGOs, and how effective are these tools?
- Q5. Do NGOs effectively utilize the public relations mix?

### **The Role and Function of Public Relations in NGOs**

Public relations, which creates an environment conducive to cooperation, understanding, and communication between individuals and organizations, is defined as a policy process aimed at maintaining these services (Demir et al., 2019). It is emphasized that public relations play a crucial role in persuading individuals to change their attitudes on various issues, contributing significantly to the functioning of society (Li, 2001). Furthermore, public relations activities within non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are implemented to shield individuals from the negative influences of their environments and to raise awareness among users about addiction-related issues.

NGOs enhance their transparency by sharing their activities and achievements with the public through publications such as annual reports, newsletters, and brochures. These communications play a pivotal role in building trust among supporters and donors. Effective advertising and promotional strategies help NGOs cultivate a positive image within society. Such efforts enable them to reach broader audiences and attract potential donors and volunteers. By leveraging media relations and interactive campaigns, NGOs draw attention to critical social issues and foster public awareness. An engaged public can drive policy changes and contribute to greater societal consciousness (Boztepe, 2014).

For NGOs to sustain their existence and achieve goals such as gaining the support of their target audience or the broader community, they must prioritize public relations. Public relations play a crucial role in building a positive image and reputation, raising public awareness about issues, garnering community support and approval, and encouraging

individuals to join the organization as members (Kanılmaz, 2017). Without public relations practices, it seems unlikely for NGOs to achieve these objectives. Therefore, NGOs must strategically manage their communication with target audiences. It is evident that there is an inseparable connection between public relations and NGOs.

Public relations efforts within NGOs differ significantly from those in other sectors. Considering the persuasive elements of public relations, the primary goal is to securely communicate messages about initiatives, projects, and activities within the framework of solidarity, participatory citizenship, and selflessness (Palttala et al., 2012). These efforts also include creating conditions for social engagement by organizing events and programs aimed at individuals and communities, promoting attention-grabbing projects, and supporting innovative ideas. Beyond these programs, the overarching objective of public relations in NGOs is to ensure sustainable societal participation built on trustworthiness, commitment, reputation, and transparency (Pavlovic et al., 2014). Thus, public relations practices in NGOs are fundamentally non-profit in nature.

The integrity and trustworthiness of NGOs are further strengthened through public relations activities. Public relations play a vital role in helping NGOs gain and maintain a strong reputation in competitive environments. Consequently, NGOs rely on public relations practices to maintain close communication with their target audiences. Regardless of where NGOs implement their programs, their primary goal is to earn and sustain the trust of their target groups (Mevlja & Kavčič, 2019). To achieve this, NGOs adopt various policies through public relations. These include enhancing communication channels with the public, securing acceptance of their mission among target audiences, fostering and maintaining a favorable environment for fundraising, implementing practices that serve the public interest, and motivating and informing key stakeholders such as volunteers and staff.

### **The Communication Strategies Employed by NGOs and the Development of an Effective Public Relations Framework**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) employ various strategies to communicate with governments, the business sector, other NGOs, and the public. These organizations strategically utilize their communication capabilities to raise awareness and drive change within society (Figenschou, 2020). Communication strategies can be categorized into internal and external approaches. Internal strategies often involve direct communication with policymakers and lobbying activities, while external strategies aim to mobilize the public through media and social networks. Resource-constrained NGOs frequently rely on external strategies to increase their visibility, voice, and authority (Duong, 2017). Communication strategies can also be differentiated based on their objectives. Key strategies include building a base of supporters, collaborating with like-minded actors, persuading policymakers and other stakeholders to adopt specific policies, raising awareness and disseminating information, and exerting pressure on policymakers. Gurung (2014) highlights that NGOs often combine these strategies to maximize their impact and foster engagement.

Various communication tools such as opinion articles, front-page news, blogs, TV, radio, online programs, and social media platforms are frequently employed by NGOs. Before the widespread use of the internet, one of the primary focuses of NGOs was interacting with mainstream media (Mevlja & Kavčič, 2019). However, this focus has shifted in modern times toward social media and institutional websites. While institutional websites

primarily serve the purpose of one-way information dissemination, social media has become an effective tool that fosters a sense of community and belonging (Moore-Gilbert & Abdul-Nabi, 2021).

In authoritarian regimes, NGOs face significant challenges in communicating within the public sphere due to restricted access to digital platforms, limitations on mass communication tools, and stringent controls. These obstacles have underscored the importance of communication through social media and digital activism. Social media offers NGOs opportunities to mobilize supporters by circumventing the limitations imposed on access to mainstream media (Duong, 2017). However, restrictions on freedom of expression in authoritarian regimes also extend to social media platforms. Such restrictions include the removal of content supporting collective action, surveillance of digital activists, and the arrest of individuals engaged in digital activism (Moore-Gilbert & Abdul-Nabi, 2021).

NGOs often aim to achieve ambitious goals despite operating with limited resources. Therefore, effectively utilizing their public relations mix is of critical importance. The public relations mix enables NGOs to establish effective communication with their target audiences, build a positive image in the public eye, secure support and resources, influence policymakers, and raise societal awareness.

### **Methodology**

This study aims to analyze the strategies developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in combating internet addiction from a public relations perspective. This analysis will be conducted using a qualitative research method. The case study approach has been selected as the methodology for this research. Case studies involve organizing and classifying systematically collected information related to a specific event (Çapar & Ceylan, 2022; Subaşı & Okumuş, 2017). In this context, activity reports and strategic plans prepared by NGOs as part of their efforts to address internet addiction will serve as the primary materials for analysis in this research.

Qualitative research is a methodology that integrates various research methods to examine societal issues or challenges faced by individuals. Within this framework, the researcher analyzes data collected from the environment where events occur, enabling comprehensive conclusions through a broad perspective. During the data collection process, the researcher may actively engage, and the gathered data typically consist of non-numerical elements such as texts and visuals. These elements often reflect individuals' perspectives and life experiences (Creswell et al., 2006).

Document analysis, used as the research method, is defined as the process of collecting, reviewing, interrogating, and analyzing various documents as primary sources of research data. This method involves the evaluation of both printed and electronic materials and can be employed either as an independent research technique or in conjunction with other methodologies (Sak et al., 2021). The NGOs included in the research sample were selected from different continents based on their efforts to combat internet addiction, and the selection criteria were determined as follows.



**Table 1.** *Reasons for the Selection of NGOs*

NGO	Area of Influence and Target Audience	Innovative Approaches	International Collaborations and Networks
<b>IREX (USA)</b>	Operates in over 100 countries, reaching various segments of society, particularly youth and professionals, through activities in education, media development, and leadership.	Provides modern solutions to social problems by utilizing technology and innovation, including media literacy and information access programs.	Forms partnerships with international organizations such as UNESCO and USAID to support education and community development projects.
<b>DEF (India)</b>	Reaches wide audiences in India, a country with a large youth population, to raise awareness about internet addiction.	Develops programs and campaigns to enhance digital literacy and promote healthy internet use.	Strengthens global impact through networks formed via collaborations with international organizations.
<b>APC (United Kingdom)</b>	Promotes the fair and sustainable use of internet technologies and digital rights globally, with a focus on digital technology and internet access.	Develops innovative strategies to protect digital rights, ensure internet safety, and safeguard privacy while promoting internet use.	Collaborates with many NGOs, non-governmental organizations, and international platforms, influencing global policies on internet access and digital rights.
<b>ORG (United Kingdom)</b>	Conducts advocacy and awareness activities throughout the United Kingdom on digital rights and internet addiction, focusing on issues such as privacy, surveillance, and censorship.	Creates technological and legal innovations to protect digital rights, organizing campaigns against internet censorship, surveillance, and advocating for data protection laws.	Works with other international digital rights advocacy groups and civil society organizations to create broader impacts in the field of digital rights.
<b>Green Crescent (Türkiye)</b>	Has a wide sphere of influence across Türkiye, playing a significant role especially in combating internet addiction among youth.	Conducts scientific research on addiction and develops educational and awareness programs targeting various segments of society.	Engages in collaborations with international organizations and similar institutions abroad, contributing to global awareness and impact.

During the analysis process, the activity reports of the five NGOs included in the research scope from 2019 to 2023 were first translated into Turkish. Subsequently, these documents were examined, and a coding scheme was developed based on information from the literature and expert opinions. Based on the developed coding scheme, an intercoder reliability analysis was conducted, a kappa test was applied, and a 75% agreement rate was achieved. Thus, the validity and reliability of the study were ensured. In the final stage, the documents were coded and analyzed line by line according to the coding scheme using the Maxqda software.

## Findings

Kod Sistemi	2019	2020	2021	2022
Types of Public Relations				
Relationship Management				
Image/Reputation Management				
Public Relations Models				
Two-Way Symmetric Model				
Public Relations Functions				
Enhancing Visibility and Credibility				
Public Opinion Formation				
Image Management				
Consulting and Advising				
Communication Strategies				
Proactive Communication Strategy				
Digital Communication Strategy				
Public Relations Mix				
Lobbying				
Corporate Advertising				
Public Interest Activities				
Tools of a Public Relations Campaign				
Social Media				
Fair-Festival				
Conference-Seminar				
Meeting-Interview				
Competitions				
Sponsorships				
Press Release				

**Figure 1.** Public Relations Strategies Employed by APC in Combating Internet Addiction Between 2019 and 2022

The visual represents a structured coding system for Public Relations, covering areas like Types of Public Relations, Public Relations Models, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Mix, and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign, with data tracked from 2019 to 2022. The consistent presence of data points across most categories suggests continuous interest and analysis over the years. Public Relations Functions and Tools appear to be particularly significant, with topics like Social Media and Press Releases consistently examined, highlighting their crucial role in PR campaigns. Additionally, Proactive and Digital Communication Strategies show sustained attention, emphasizing their relevance in modern PR practices.

Kod Sistemi	2019	2020	2021	2022
Types of Public Relations				
Relationship Management				
Image/Reputation Management				
Public Relations Models				
Two-Way Symmetric Model				
Public Relations Functions				
Enhancing Visibility and Credibility				
Public Opinion Formation				
Image Management				
Consulting and Advising				
Communication Strategies				
Proactive Communication Strategy				
Digital Communication Strategy				
Public Relations Mix				
Lobbying				
Corporate Advertising				
Public Interest Activities				
Tools of a Public Relations Campaign				
Social Media				
Fair-Festival				
Conference-Seminar				
Meeting-Interview				
Competitions				

**Figure 2.** Public Relations Strategies Employed by ORG in Combating Internet Addiction Between 2019 and 2022





















The visual presents a structured coding system related to Public Relations, categorized into key areas such as Types of Public Relations, Public Relations Models, Public Relations Functions, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Mix, and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign, with data tracked from 2019 to 2022. The presence of data points across all years indicates consistent analysis of these topics. Public Relations Functions and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign appear to have strong relevance, with elements like Social Media, Press Releases, and Sponsorships consistently studied, highlighting their importance in PR practices. Additionally, Communication Strategies, particularly Proactive and Digital Communication Strategies, receive continuous attention, reflecting their significance in modern PR approaches.



**Figure 3.** Public Relations Strategies Employed by DEF in Combating Internet Addiction Between 2019 and 2023

The visual continues to display a structured coding system for Public Relations, tracking data from 2019 to 2023 across categories such as Types of Public Relations, Public Relations Models, Public Relations Functions, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Mix, and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign. A key observation is the consistency of data points across all years, indicating sustained research interest. However, 2023 shows notable activity in specific areas, particularly within Tools of a Public Relations Campaign, where Conference-Seminar, Competitions, and Sponsorships have increased focus, as seen in the highlighted red squares. This suggests a growing emphasis on event-based PR strategies in recent years.



Kod Sistemi	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
✓  Types of Public Relations					
 Relationship Management					
 Image/Reputation Management					
✓  Public Relations Models					
 Two-Way Symmetric Model					
✓  Public Relations Functions					
 Enhancing Visibility and Credibility					
 Public Opinion Formation					
 Image Management					
 Consulting and Advising					
✓  Communication Strategies					
 Proactive Communication Strategy					
 Digital Communication Strategy					
✓  Public Relations Mix					
 Lobbying					
 Corporate Advertising					
 Public Interest Activities					
✓  Tools of a Public Relations Campaign					
 Social Media					
 Fair-Festival					
 Conference-Seminar					
 Meeting-Interview					
 Competitions					
 Sponsorships					
 Press Release					

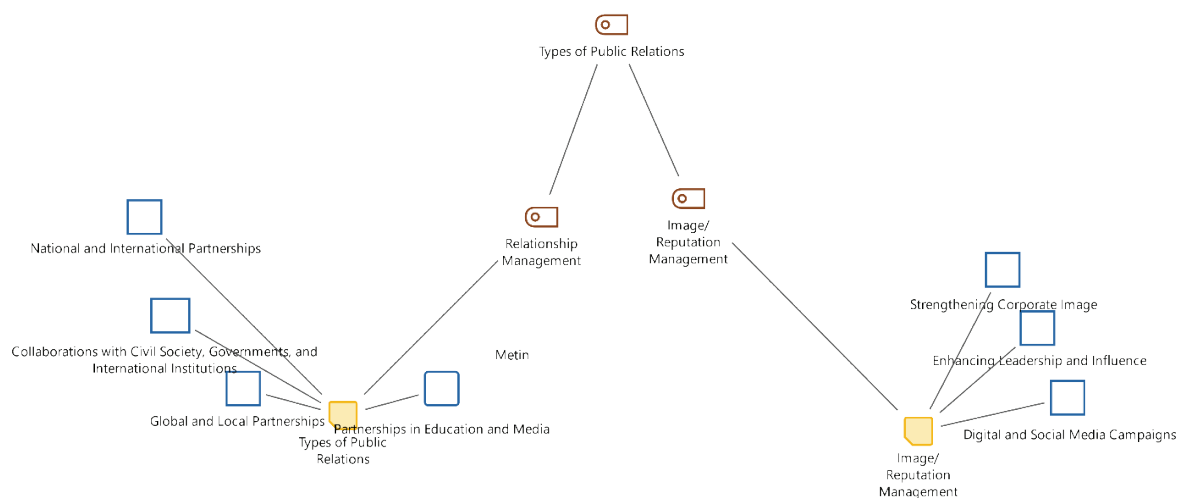
**Figure 4.** Public Relations Strategies Employed by IREX in Combating Internet Addiction Between 2019 and 2023

The visual maintains a structured coding system for Public Relations, spanning from 2019 to 2023, and categorizing key areas such as Types of Public Relations, Public Relations Models, Public Relations Functions, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Mix, and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign. The data points remain consistently distributed across all years, indicating a steady focus on these topics without major fluctuations. Unlike the previous version with highlighted red squares, this version shows uniform engagement across all subcategories. This suggests a balanced and ongoing interest in various PR strategies and tools, rather than a sudden emphasis on specific areas.

Kod Sistemi	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Types of Public Relations					
Relationship Management					
Image/Reputation Management					
Public Relations Models					
Two-Way Symmetric Model					
Public Relations Functions					
Enhancing Visibility and Credibility					
Public Opinion Formation					
Image Management					
Consulting and Advising					
Communication Strategies					
Proactive Communication Strategy					
Digital Communication Strategy					
Public Relations Mix					
Lobbying					
Corporate Advertising					
Public Interest Activities					
Tools of a Public Relations Campaign					
Social Media					
Fair-Festival					
Conference-Seminar					
Meeting-Interview					
Competitions					
Sponsorships					
Press Release					

**Figure 5.** Public Relations Strategies Employed by the Green Crescent in Combating Internet Addiction Between 2019 and 2023

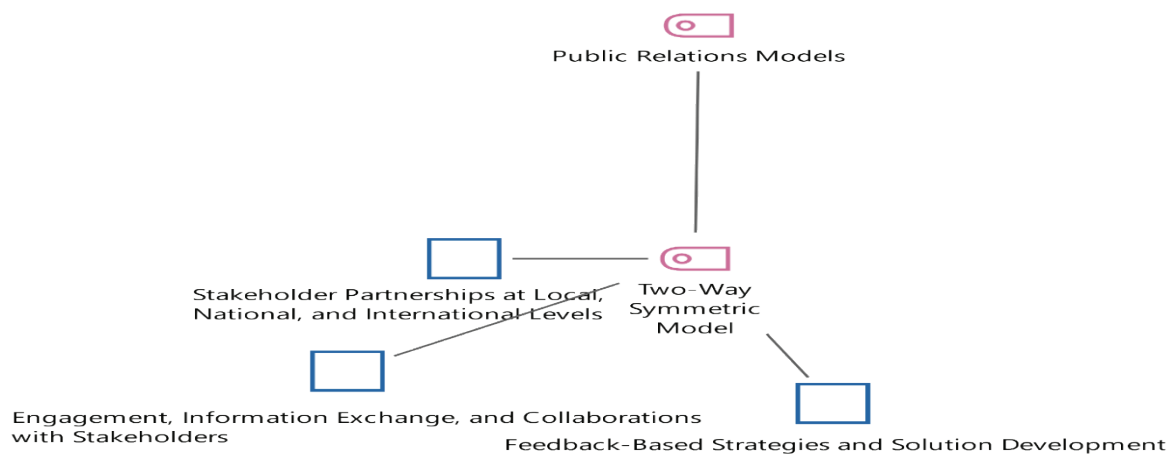
The visual continues to track Public Relations topics from 2019 to 2023 across key categories such as Types of Public Relations, Public Relations Models, Public Relations Functions, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Mix, and Tools of a Public Relations Campaign. The majority of topics show consistent engagement across all years, indicating sustained interest. However, a red-highlighted data point in 2020 under “Conference-Seminar” suggests a notable spike or emphasis on this area during that year, possibly reflecting an increased focus on seminars as a PR tool. This may indicate a shift in communication strategies during that period, likely influenced by external factors such as digital transitions or global events.



**Figure 6.** Types of Public Relations in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent

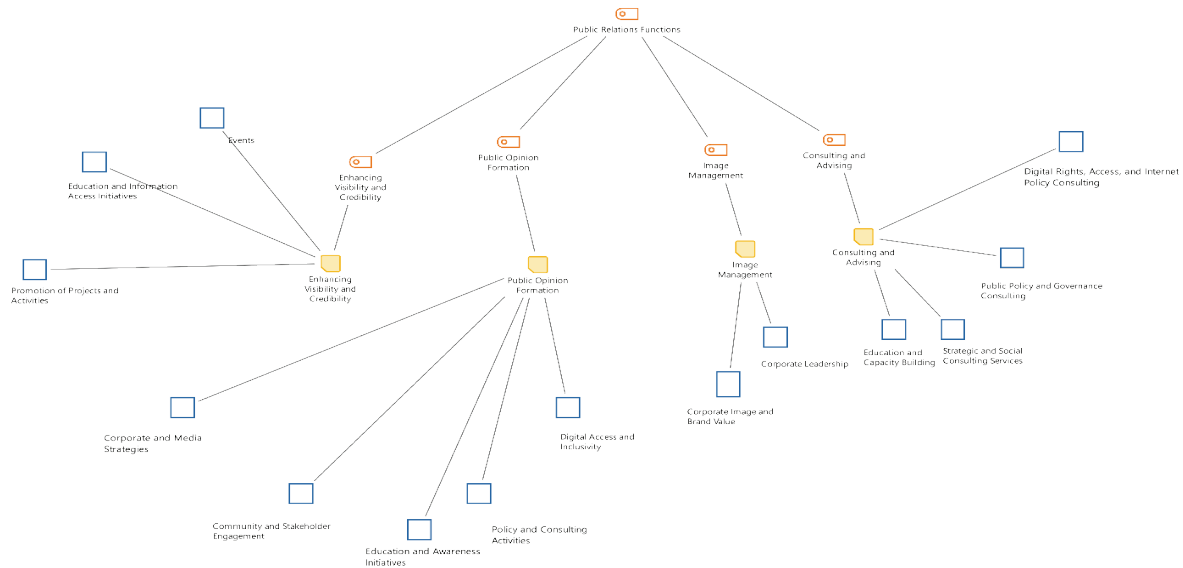
APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent engage in strategic initiatives within the scope of image and reputation management, as well as relationship management. They

undertake communication activities and campaigns to strengthen their corporate image, reinforce their leadership, and solidify their position in both national and international arenas. These organizations actively manage public perception and implement initiatives aimed at enhancing their brand value. In terms of relationship management, they develop strategic collaborations on both global and local levels, partnering with civil society organizations, governments, educational institutions, and the private sector to implement joint projects. By establishing sustainable partnerships, they expand their sphere of influence. Additionally, they aim to amplify their social and economic impact through campaigns that enhance digital visibility, sponsorships that foster strong community ties, and sectoral collaborations. The study determined that NGOs particularly focus on image and reputation management, as well as relationship management, as types of public relations. They organize communication campaigns to strengthen their corporate image, reinforce their leadership positions, and establish a strong presence both nationally and internationally. Additionally, they develop sustainable relationships by forming strategic partnerships with governments, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Accordingly, the research question “What types of public relations are preferred by NGOs?” has been answered.



**Figure 7.** *Public Relations Models in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent*

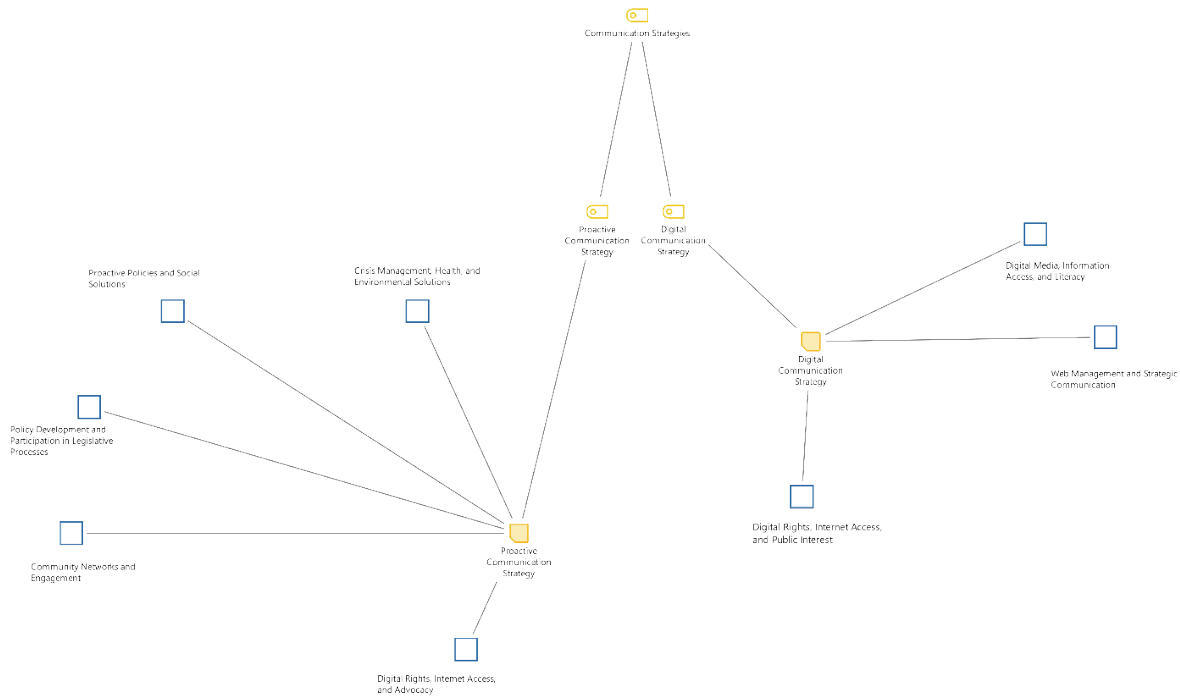
APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent foster mutual interaction and information sharing by developing stakeholder collaborations at local, national, and international levels within the framework of the two-way symmetric model. These organizations aim to establish sustainable partnerships by forming mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders and adopting feedback-driven communication strategies to enhance engagement processes. At the same time, they implement approaches that support knowledge exchange, enabling them to develop strategic solutions tailored to the needs of communities and stakeholders while working towards shared goals. In this regard, they shape their strategies by incorporating feedback to make collaborations more sustainable and effective, aligning their policies with stakeholder expectations.



**Figure 8.** Public Relations Functions in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent

APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent aim to raise awareness and enhance social impact by providing policy development, guidance, and strategic support services within the scope of consultancy and public advocacy. APC offers consultancy on spectrum management and internet policies while shaping public opinion on digital rights and equitable internet access. ORG actively engages with policymakers to contribute to policy-making processes, strengthening its credibility through events and media visibility. DEF conducts awareness initiatives on digital literacy and strategic guidance, expanding its reach through media literacy programs and campaigns. IREX provides consultancy to local governments and young leaders, offering guidance on education systems while increasing its public visibility through partnerships with the media and education sectors. The Green Crescent focuses on strengthening public health by providing consultancy services to individuals and institutions while implementing strategies to enhance its reputation and international recognition. Through strategic communication, media engagement, and collaborative partnerships, these organizations work to create a lasting public impact and reinforce their credibility. As seen in the findings, NGOs (APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and Green Crescent) prioritize consultancy and public advocacy among public relations functions. They actively engage in areas such as policy development, public awareness, educational activities, and leadership development. Through these efforts, they create long-term social impacts on both individuals and institutions.

Therefore, these findings answer the research question “Which public relations functions do NGOs prioritize?”



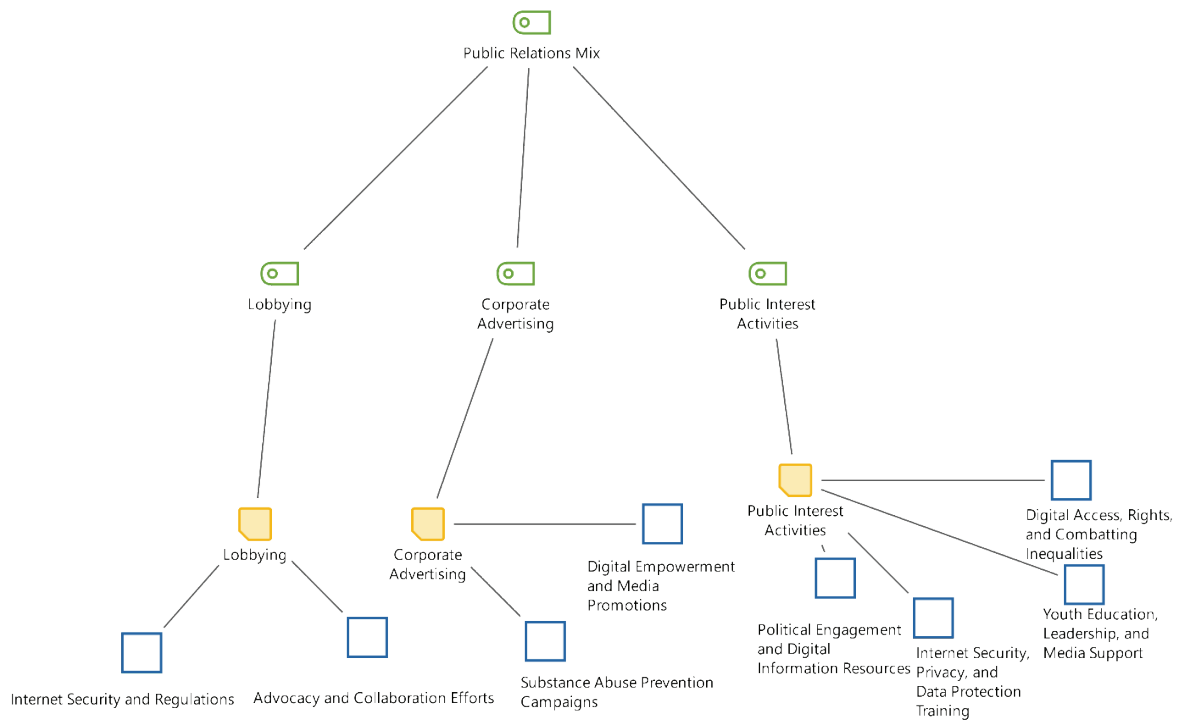
**Figure 9.** *Communication Strategies in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent*

APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent implement digital and proactive communication strategies to inform, raise awareness, and enhance public engagement. Within the framework of digital communication strategies, APC promotes the use of digital technologies for public benefit by raising awareness on internet access and digital rights, while ORG leverages social media to reach broad audiences and increase social awareness. DEF establishes centers in rural areas to improve digital information access, whereas IREX develops strategies that support digital transformation in media and education. The Green Crescent, on the other hand, provides informative content on addiction prevention through social media and web-based platforms. Under proactive communication strategies, APC and DEF support community networks by advocating for digital rights and crisis management, while ORG maintains continuous dialogue with policymakers to contribute to policy development processes. IREX leads leadership and community development projects, whereas The Green Crescent adopts proactive approaches in addiction prevention, offering alternative solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through digital and strategic communication efforts, these organizations aim to reach wider audiences, contribute to policy-making processes, and enhance societal impact.

Based on the findings, APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and Green Crescent adopt digital and proactive communication strategies. Within the scope of digital communication strategies, tools such as social media, web-based platforms, and digital content production are utilized. The reason for choosing these strategies is to reach broad audiences, raise awareness, and enhance engagement. Proactive strategies, on the other hand, play an effective role particularly in crisis management and policy development processes, ensuring that NGOs maintain continuous communication with society.

Accordingly, the research question “What communication strategies do NGOs adopt, and what are the reasons behind their selection?” has been answered.

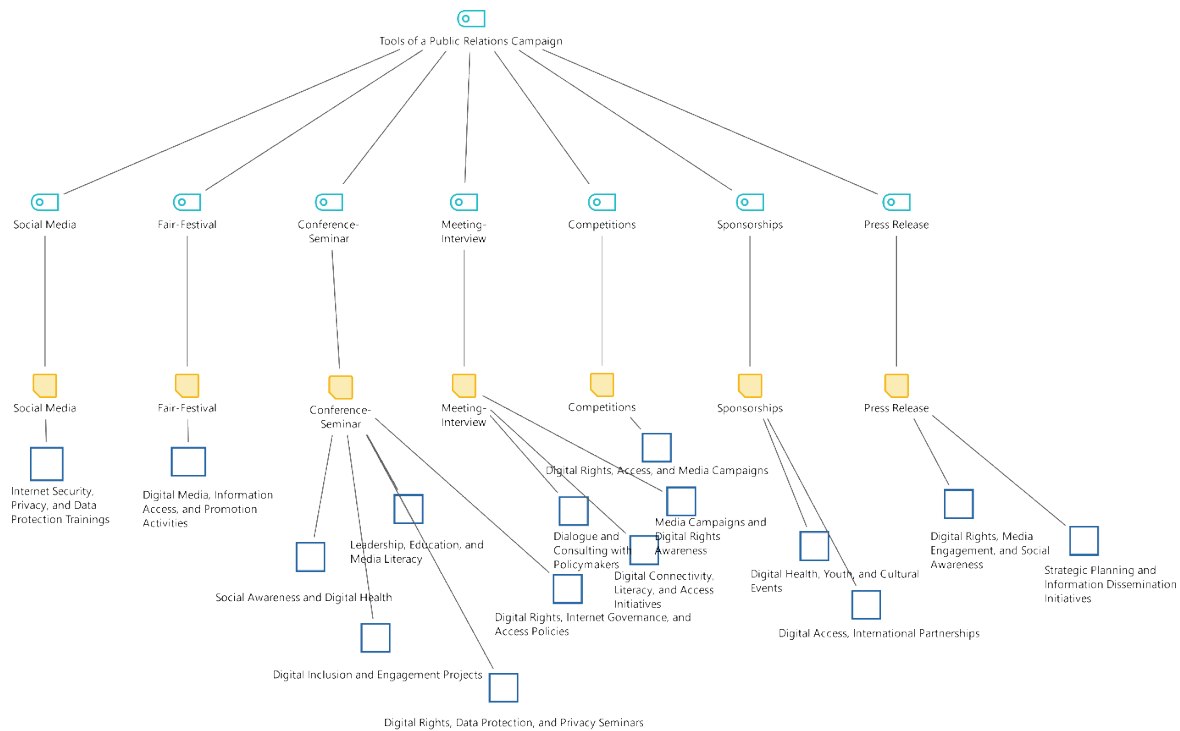




**Figure 10.** Public Relations Mix in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent

APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent develop various strategies within the scope of public interest initiatives and corporate advertising to create social impact. APC advocates for digital access and rights, working to reduce structural inequalities, while ORG raises awareness on digital rights by organizing training programs on internet security, privacy, and data protection. IREX supports leadership development through youth education and local government partnerships, aiming to empower young people in the media sector and enhance their access to information. DEF promotes the digital empowerment of artists to increase brand recognition while encouraging public engagement through media announcements and advertising campaigns. The Green Crescent conducts extensive advertising campaigns on internet addiction, online safety, and responsible digital usage to raise awareness. Through strategic communication, media utilization, and educational programs, these organizations contribute to public awareness and serve the common good. The research findings show that NGOs effectively utilize the public relations mix. Public interest initiatives, corporate advertising efforts, and media utilization contribute to raising societal awareness (See Figure 10). By combining various public relations elements such as educational programs, sponsorships, and media announcements, they conduct effective campaigns. This demonstrates that NGOs employ a variety of public relations strategies in a balanced and integrated manner.

Accordingly, the research question “Do NGOs effectively utilize the public relations mix?” has been answered.



**Figure 11.** Tools of Public Relations Campaigns in APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent

APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and the Green Crescent continue their public awareness and advocacy efforts through various communication strategies, including press releases, conferences, seminars, meetings, and sponsorship activities. APC informs the public about digital inclusivity and internet governance through press releases while contributing to global policy discussions by addressing internet governance from a digital rights and human rights perspective at international events. ORG organizes media campaigns and digital rights seminars to ensure that individuals and institutions navigate the digital world responsibly, whereas DEF focuses on enhancing digital connectivity in rural areas, participating in international fairs to promote digital technologies, and conducting social media campaigns on data protection. IREX fosters social awareness by providing training in media literacy and leadership, while The Green Crescent increases awareness in the fight against addiction through press releases, supporting digital detox initiatives, and organizing competitions and seminars for young people. Through these media-driven efforts, all these organizations strive to reach wider audiences, strengthen their awareness campaigns, and create a lasting social impact. According to the findings, NGOs frequently use press releases, conferences, seminars, meetings, and sponsorship activities in their public relations campaigns. It has been observed that events such as conferences and seminars have increased in recent years, and that press releases and social media campaigns have been consistently utilized. These tools have been successful both in raising awareness and in establishing effective communication with target audiences. Therefore, the research question “What public relations campaign tools are used by NGOs, and how effective are these tools?” has been answered.

## Conclusion

This study analyzed the strategies developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to combat internet addiction from a public relations perspective. The population of the

research consists of NGOs working to combat internet addiction. In selecting the NGOs included in the sample, criteria such as the level of recognition regarding internet addiction, scope of influence, size of the audience reached, innovative practices, the extent of international collaborations, and the development of network structures were taken into consideration. In this context, five NGOs from three different continents were selected as the sample: IREX from the United States, DEF from India, ORG and APC from the United Kingdom, and Green Crescent from Türkiye. The activity reports of these organizations covering the years 2019–2023 were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method and the MAXQDA software.

The analysis results reveal the following findings: NGOs combating internet addiction engage in strategic initiatives in terms of corporate image and relationship management. These organizations carry out various communication activities and campaigns to strengthen their corporate image, reinforce their leadership positions, and solidify their standing at both national and international levels. They actively play a role in managing public perception and undertake initiatives aimed at increasing their brand value.

In terms of relationship management, they develop strategic partnerships with local and global civil society organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, and the private sector, thereby expanding their sphere of influence. Through campaigns that enhance digital visibility, sponsorships that strengthen community ties, and sectoral collaborations, they aim to increase their social and economic impact.

Regarding the two-way symmetric model and stakeholder relations, NGOs (APC, ORG, DEF, IREX, and Green Crescent) promote mutual interaction and information sharing by developing stakeholder collaborations at local, national, and international levels. Within the framework of this model, sustainable partnerships have been targeted, and interaction processes have been strengthened through feedback-driven communication strategies. Thus, it has become possible to develop strategic solutions shaped according to the needs of both society and stakeholders. In the fields of consultancy and public advocacy, these organizations aim to inform the public and enhance social impact through functions such as policy development, guidance, and strategic support. For example, APC provides consultancy on spectrum management and internet policies, working to shape public opinion regarding digital rights. ORG actively engages with policymakers, contributing to decision-making processes; DEF raises awareness through digital literacy campaigns and offers strategic guidance. IREX provides consultancy to local governments and young leaders on education systems and increases its public visibility through collaborations with the media and education sectors. Green Crescent focuses on strengthening public health through consultancy services offered to individuals and institutions.

The communication strategies adopted by NGOs in combating internet addiction manifest themselves through digital and proactive approaches aimed at informing the public, raising awareness, and enhancing societal engagement. In this regard, APC promotes the public use of digital technologies; ORG effectively utilizes social media; DEF establishes digital information centers in rural areas to improve digital inclusivity; IREX develops strategies supporting digital transformation in media and education; and Green Crescent provides informative content on addiction prevention through social media and web-based platforms.

The public relations mix used in combating addiction exhibits a twofold structure. The strategies adopted by NGOs aim to create social impact both through public interest initiatives and corporate advertising efforts. For instance, APC targets reducing structural inequalities in digital access and rights; ORG organizes educational programs on internet security, privacy, and data protection; IREX offers training to empower youth in the media sector; DEF enhances brand recognition by digitally empowering artists; and Green Crescent conducts extensive campaigns focusing on internet addiction, online safety, and responsible digital usage.

The public relations tools used in combating internet addiction include various communication methods such as press releases, conferences, seminars, meetings, and sponsorship activities, aimed at informing the public and conducting advocacy efforts. In this context, APC publishes press releases on digital inclusivity and internet governance and brings these issues to the forefront at international events. ORG organizes media campaigns and digital rights seminars; DEF works to improve digital connectivity in rural areas and promotes technology at international fairs. IREX raises awareness by providing training in media literacy and leadership, while Green Crescent supports digital detox initiatives and organizes competitions and seminars aimed at young people. Through these efforts, the mentioned NGOs strive to reach broader audiences, strengthen their awareness campaigns, and create a lasting social impact in combating internet addiction.

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# Strategic Approaches of Non-Governmental Organizations in Combating Internet Addiction

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## Extended Abstract

Internet addiction leads to significant physical and psychological health complications, as well as social challenges. This condition necessitates a well-structured treatment process and presents a major obstacle to the reintegration of children, young individuals, and adults into society (Dağlı, 2019). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in supporting individuals struggling with internet addiction by offering psychological and social assistance through motivational counseling, therapy, and rehabilitation programs in various fields. The impact of internet addiction extends beyond the individual, affecting society as a whole (Musai & Darkesh, 2014). Therefore, NGOs must design and implement effective strategies to combat this addiction and ensure high-quality care for those affected, as internet addiction deteriorates both individual well-being and societal conditions.

To address the issue of technology and substance addiction among children and young people, NGOs establish rehabilitation and treatment centers. These facilities cater to the educational, physical, emotional, and psychological needs of individuals suffering from internet addiction, facilitating their reintegration into society and their local communities (Throuvala et al., 2021). Providing access to rehabilitation services, modifying individuals' dependency on technology, substances, and the internet, and offering social and psychological support are among the core objectives of NGOs in this domain. Additionally, NGOs emphasize the importance of preventive and protective measures, particularly for vulnerable groups, aiming to enhance public awareness regarding addiction (Ari, 2022).

Public relations (PR) strategies employed by NGOs significantly differ from those in other sectors. Given the persuasive nature of public relations, NGOs primarily focus on effectively communicating their initiatives, projects, and activities within the framework of solidarity, participatory citizenship, and altruism (Palttala et al., 2012). These efforts involve fostering public engagement through organized programs and events, promoting socially impactful initiatives, and encouraging innovative ideas. Beyond these specific activities, the fundamental objective of PR within NGOs is to cultivate sustainable community participation by building trust, credibility, commitment, and transparency (Pavlovic et al., 2014). As such, PR practices in NGOs remain inherently non-commercial.

The credibility and reputation of NGOs are further reinforced through their PR strategies. Public relations serve as a fundamental tool for NGOs to establish and maintain a strong presence in a competitive landscape. Therefore, NGOs rely on PR practices to ensure consistent engagement with their target audiences. Regardless of the location in which NGOs operate, their primary objective is to gain and sustain public trust (Mevlja & Kavčič, 2019). To achieve this, NGOs adopt various PR policies, such as improving communication channels with the public, fostering acceptance of their mission among target audiences, securing a favorable environment for fundraising, implementing public interest initiatives, and effectively informing and motivating key stakeholders, including volunteers and staff.

NGOs employ a range of strategic communication approaches to engage with governments, private sector entities, other NGOs, and the general public. These organizations leverage their communication capacities to increase awareness and influence societal change (Figenschou, 2020). Communication strategies can be categorized into internal and external approaches. Internal strategies often involve direct engagement with policymakers and lobbying activities, whereas external strategies focus on mobilizing public support through media and social networks. Given their resource constraints, NGOs frequently prioritize external strategies to enhance their visibility, influence, and credibility (Duong, 2017). Additionally, communication strategies can be classified based on their objectives, which include expanding support networks, collaborating with like-minded organizations, advocating for policy change, raising public awareness, and applying pressure on policymakers. Gurung (2014) highlights that NGOs often integrate multiple strategies to optimize their impact and foster engagement.

This study examines the communication strategies employed by NGOs in addressing internet addiction from a public relations perspective. It focuses on organizations operating across three continents—Asia, Europe, and the Americas—specifically analyzing the United States, India, the United Kingdom, and Türkiye. The selected organizations include IREX from the United States, DEF from India, ORG and APC from the United Kingdom, and The Green Crescent from Türkiye. Furthermore, this research investigates the activities of these five NGOs between 2019 and 2023, evaluating their areas of influence, innovative approaches, international collaborations, and network structures through a PR lens. A particular emphasis is placed on assessing the applicability and sustainability of innovative methods adopted by NGOs in Türkiye to combat internet addiction. Within this framework, Turkish NGOs' social innovation strategies, public awareness initiatives, and impact-driven projects are analyzed to determine their contributions to societal well-being.

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

- Q1: What communication strategies do NGOs employ, and what factors influence their selection?
- Q2: Which public relations functions do NGOs prioritize?
- Q3: What forms of public relations do NGOs prefer?
- Q4: What public relations campaign tools are utilized by NGOs, and how effective are they?
- Q5: Do NGOs successfully integrate the public relations mix into their strategies?

Based on the analyses conducted, this study highlights the significant role of public relations in combating internet addiction through the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It examines the definition, stages, and effects of internet addiction while assessing NGO activities over the past five years. The findings reveal that NGOs utilize various public relations strategies to raise awareness, educate the public, and promote healthy internet use. Different communication models, such as two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical approaches, are employed to engage target audiences effectively. Additionally, collaborations with governments and institutions enhance outreach and

impact. Public relations also contribute to policy development and intervention programs, supporting a comprehensive approach to addressing internet addiction.

**Keywords:** NGOs, Internet Addiction, Public Relations, Communication Strategies, Public Relations Strategies.

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