



***INSTITUTIONALIZING AND MANAGING CORPORATE REPUTATION
THROUGH COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP AMONG LEADING
COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA GOVERNMENT- LINKED COMPANIES***

ZAINAL ARIFIN MD TAHIR

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By

ZAINAL ARIFIN MD TAHIR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

June 2020

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2020

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This study was conducted in exploring and examining the aspect of corporate reputation through communication leadership of the communication and media of Government-linked companies. It angled from the government control and the presence of new technological system, involving CEOs and senior management teams. Previously, most of the studies pertaining to Government-linked companies were focused on, for instance, correlation between CSR practices among higher institutions, particularly regarding corporate reputation, leadership style, and job satisfaction. Other studies were on exploring publicly-listed corporations (PLCs) and Government Linked companies (GLCs) based on David's dual process model. However, there is scant research exploring the communication leadership and how it could enhances credibility towards improving corporate reputation.

Data collection of this qualitative research have been made through face-to-face interviews involved 11 informants: five (5) CEOs and six (6) of senior management staffs of the communication and media of Government-linked companies based in Klang Valley. The informants aged between mid-twenties to late fifties, under the corporate communication division which commonly have to directly reporting to CEO office. The voice-recorded interviews replayed, transcribed, organized and undergone thematic analysis for pattern detection and theme generation where the Atlas.ti was employed. The *institutional theory* used to interpret the findings and guide the analysis. This theory is pertinent in view of the structural preconditions that govern and give the companies their legitimacy. A precedent study has used *neo-institutional theories* in explaining the interactions involved between the media, society and organisations in relation to CEO communication and positioning. This study aspires to make a specifically significant contribution to the study of

communication leadership. The informants could determine on how their role as a Communication leader towards improving corporate reputation. They also give indication that, as a GLC entity, they are shouldering Government mandates. They realized that media which regards as an intangible asset, play a great role in shaping the reputation of the leader.

The informants associated that as communication leader, they should demonstrate communication leadership toward improving credibility. The informants also mentioned that they need to be well acceptable as a leader by/of stakeholders. All informants also realized that the credibility of the leader and the media itself, play a great role in significantly shaping their integrity through the communication and the reputation of the organization. The informants could identify on how communication leader internalize the value of communication leadership towards improving corporate reputation. The informants see that they need to have well accepted in term of their character as a leader. They also realized that the structure/hierarchy of communication play a great role too. Additionally, the analyzed theme indicated that the internalize role also contributed to the value of communication leadership towards improving corporate reputation.

In conclusion, all of three research questions have been effectively addressed and the findings from the study stand evidence to the same. The CEO and senior management team also need to apply overall principles concerning the communication leadership towards enhances credibility as well as improves corporate reputation of the communication and media of Government-linked companies.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**INSTITUTIONALISASI DAN PENGURUSAN REPUTASI KORPORAT
MELALUI KEPEMIMPINAN KOMUNIKASI DI KALANGAN SYARIKAT
KOMUNIKASI DAN MEDIA BERKAITAN KERAJAAN**

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Kajian ini dilakukan dalam mengeksplorasi dan meneliti aspek reputasi korporat melalui kepemimpinan komunikasi terhadap Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan (komunikasi dan media). Ianya dilihat dari aspek kawalan pihak kerajaan dan juga dengan adanya sistem teknologi baru, dimana kajian ini melibatkan Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif dan kakitangan pengurusan kanan. Sebelum ini dan secara umumnya, sebahagian besar kajian yang berkaitan dengan Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan lebih terfokus kepada seperti, korelasi antara praktik Tanggungjawab Sosial Korporat di kalangan institusi pengajian tinggi, terutama mengenai reputasi korporat, gaya kepemimpinan, dan kepuasan kerja. Kajian lain adalah seperti dalam meneroka syarikat yang disenaraikan secara terbuka (*Public Listed Company*) dan Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan (*Government-Linked Company*) berdasarkan model Proses Ganda David (David's dual process). Namun, hanya terdapat sedikit sahaja kajian yang meneroka kepemimpinan komunikasi dan bagaimana ia dapat meningkatkan kredibiliti seterusnya meningkatkan reputasi korporat.

Pengumpulan data penyelidikan kualitatif ini telah dibuat melalui temu bual secara bersemuka melibatkan 11 informan: lima (5) Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif dan enam (6) kakitangan pengurusan kanan Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan (komunikasi dan media) berpusat di Lembah Klang. Para informan berusia di dalam lingkungan antara pertengahan dua puluhan hingga akhir lima puluhan, di bawah bahagian komunikasi korporat yang biasanya membuat laporan terus ke pejabat Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif. Temu bual yang dirakam suara dimainkan semula, ditranskrip, disusun dan menjalani analisis tematik untuk pengesanan corak dan penjanaan tema menggunakan Atlas.ti. Teori Institusi digunakan untuk mentafsirkan penemuan dan panduan analisa. Teori ini bersesuaian dengan prasyarat struktur yang mengatur dan memberi kesahihan kepada syarikat. Satu kajian terdahulu telah menggunakan teori neo-institusi dalam menjelaskan interaksi yang terlibat antara media, masyarakat dan organisasi

berkaitan dengan komunikasi dan kedudukan Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif. Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk memberikan sumbangan yang signifikan khusus didalam kajian kepemimpinan komunikasi.

Para informan dapat menentukan bagaimana peranan mereka sebagai pemimpin komunikasi ke arah meningkatkan reputasi korporat. Mereka juga memberi petunjuk bahawa, sebagai entiti Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan, mereka memikul mandat pemerintah. Mereka menyedari bahawa media yang dianggap sebagai aset tidak ketara, berperanan besar dalam membentuk reputasi pemimpin.

Para informan mengaitkan bahawa sebagai pemimpin komunikasi, mereka harus menunjukkan kepemimpinan komunikasi dalam meningkatkan kredibiliti. Para informan juga menyatakan bahawa mereka perlu menjadi pemimpin yang boleh diterima oleh pihak berkepentingan. Semua informan juga menyedari bahawa kredibiliti pemimpin dan media itu sendiri, berperanan besar dalam membentuk integriti mereka melalui komunikasi dan reputasi organisasi.

Para informan dapat mengetahui bagaimana pemimpin komunikasi menginternalisasi nilai kepemimpinan komunikasi ke arah meningkatkan reputasi syarikat. Para informan melihat bahawa mereka perlu diterima baik dari segi watak mereka sebagai pemimpin. Mereka juga menyedari bahawa struktur / hierarki komunikasi juga berperanan besar. Selain itu, tema yang dianalisa menunjukkan bahawa peranan dalaman juga menyumbang kepada nilai kepemimpinan komunikasi ke arah meningkatkan reputasi syarikat.

Kesimpulannya, ketiga-tiga persoalan kajian telah ditangani dengan berkesan dan hasil kajian menunjukkan bukti yang sama. Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif dan kakitangan pengurusan kanan juga perlu menerapkan prinsip-prinsip keseluruhan mengenai kepemimpinan komunikasi untuk meningkatkan kredibiliti serta meningkatkan reputasi korporat Syarikat berkaitan kerajaan (komunikasi dan media).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	ABSTRACT	i
	ABSTRAK	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
	APPROVAL	vi
	DECLARATION	viii
	LIST OF TABLES	xiii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER		
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Background of the study	1
	1.2 Communication and Corporate Reputation	5
	1.3 Communication Leadership	6
	1.4 Institutionalized Role Orientation	7
	1.5 Statement of the Problem	10
	1.6 Objective of the study	15
	1.7 Research Questions	16
	1.8 Research Objectives	16
	1.9 Significance of the study	16
	1.10 Scope and Limitation of the study	18
	1.11 Definition of Keywords	20
	1.11.1 Institutionalizing	20
	1.11.2 Managing	20
	1.11.3 Government-linked companies	20
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	22
	2.1 Institutionalizing Communication	22
	2.2 Dual Role towards Corporate Reputation and Communication Leadership	23
	2.3 Institutional of Organization	25
	2.4 Structural of Organization	26
	2.5 Related studies – Communication, Media, and Corporate Reputation	32
	2.6 Communication and Corporate Reputation	33
	2.6.1 Communication – An Overview	33
	2.6.2 Reputation – An Overview	35
	2.7 Measuring Reputation	37
	2.8 Reputational Attributes	39
	2.9 Reputation, Communication and Credibility	41
	2.10 Defining Corporate Reputation	47

2.11	Corporate Reputation and Leadership	50
2.12	Communication Leadership – An Overview	53
2.13	Defining and Conceptualizing Communication Leadership	59
2.14	Communication Leadership – A Framework	63
2.15	Media Usage	67
	2.15.1 Media and Communication Technology	68
2.16	Reputational of Media	69
2.17	Government Linked Companies – An Overview	71
2.18	Background information and the Structure of the participation of the Communication and Media Government-linked Companies	73
2.19	Conceptual framework	79
3	MATERIALS AND METHODS / METHODOLOGY	83
3.1	Research Philosophy	83
3.2	Research Strategies	86
3.3	Population and Sampling Procedure	88
3.4	Research Method	92
3.5	Designing an Interview	93
3.6	Administration of Interviews	94
3.7	Information Gathering	95
3.8	Research Ethics	98
3.9	Reliability and Validity	99
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	103
4.1	Informants' Profiles	104
	Core Textual Themes and Sub themes – An Explanation	106
4.2	Communicate as a communication leader towards improving corporate reputation	106
	4.2.1 Carry out government mandates	107
	4.2.2 Improvement/enhancement of reputation of organization	112
	4.2.3 Communication Leader communicate with stakeholders in industry	120
	4.2.4 Media and intangible Asset	127
	4.2.5 Reputational Leader	132
4.3	Communication leader demonstrate Communication Leadership in improving credibility	137
	4.3.1 Acceptable Communication Leader by/of the stakeholders	137
	4.3.2 Credibility of Leader & Media	141

4.3.3	Integrity as Communication Leader	146
4.4	Communication leader internalize the value of Communication Leadership	149
4.4.1	Character of leader	149
4.4.2	Communication Structure/ hierarchy	153
4.4.3	Internalize role	160
4.5	Discussion	168
5	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	176
5.1	Summary of the Research	176
5.2	Answering the Research Questions	178
5.3	Summary of the findings	182
5.4	Implications of the Study	186
5.4.1	Theoretical implications	186
5.4.2	Practical implications	187
5.4.3	Methodological implications	189
5.5	Recommendations for Future Study	190
	REFERENCES	191
	APPENDICES	250
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	258
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	259

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Researches Pertaining to Corporate Reputation	44
2	Categorization of Corporate Reputation literature	47
3	Selected reviews of Corporate Reputation literature and authors' definitions	48
4	Reputation - Main International Ratings	50
5	Summarizes of main methodologies for assessing corporate reputation	52
6	Researches Pertaining to Communication Leadership	55
7	Researches Pertaining to GLCs	76
8	Philosophical Assumptions	86
9	Research Strategy, Design, and Methodology	87
10	Invited and/shortlisted GLCs	89
11	Interviews with five (05) communication & media GLCs involving CEOs, HODs and/ Executives	90
12	Summary of Interview sessions	91
13	Profile/Information of the interviewed informants	105

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Institutional Theory	29
2	Industry Trends	31
3	Stakeholder's Reputation	38
4	Reputational Premium Value	39
5	Reputation Attributes	40
6	RepTrak™ Reputation Model	41
7	Communication and Reputation	42
8	Credibility	43
9	Relationship between Reputation and Leadership	51
10	Relationship between Reputation and Leadership	51
11	Communication Leadership Framework	65
12	Hierarchical Status	67
13	Structure of the Government-linked Media and Communication Companies	75
14	Conceptual Framework	80
15	Reputation as a Strategic Asset	82
16	Research Onion Diagram	85
17	Analytical Concept	102
18	The key idea of themes of Carry out government mandates	112
19	The key idea of themes of Improvement of Reputation of Organization	120
20	The key idea of themes of Communication Leader communicate with stakeholders	127
21	The key idea of themes of Media and Intangible Asset	132
22	The key idea of themes of Reputational Leader	136
23	The key idea of themes of Acceptable Communication Leader by/of the stakeholders	141
24	The key idea of themes of Credibility of Leader & Media	145
25	The key idea of themes of Integrity As Communication Leader	148
26	The key idea of themes of Character of Leader	153
27	The key idea of themes of Communication Structure/Hierarchy	159
28	The key idea of themes of Internalize Role	167
29	Details of the emerging themes construct	174
30	Simplified Conceptual Framework based on the analysis	175
31	Conceptual Framework after the analysis	185

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GLC	Government Linked Company
HOD	Head of Department/Division



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background of the study, the research problem statements, the research questions and research objectives, the significance of the study, scope and limitation, and keywords definitions.

1.1 Background of the study

The corporate communication concept might be considered external and internal in form, such as within the form occurring within an organization that is not affiliated to mass media. Additionally, modern corporations should understand that the rare roles that corporate communication play and which have been set up with communication divisions have transformed how global corporations transact their businesses (Abdullah, 2009). However, in particular, within mass media enterprises, the external component may feature aspects, which are associated with the media content they generate, as such are regarded as products of the company.

Similar to controlling tangible products, it is sensible to ride on the assumption that media-oriented CEOs will also supervise content quality created by production staff. The CEO might be unable to inspire competitive strategies within tangible terms such as product leadership; however, intangible as Communication Leadership in different communicator strands in the media firm. In addition to that, reputation is regarded as the most common term that has been given priority by most companies to enhance their organizational strategy and internationalization policy (Abdullah, 2011). According to Barrett (2014), all leaders of organizations must realize that their companies' reputations rely on their internal ethos and the perceptions of their many external stakeholders. They cannot ignore the importance in establishing and maintaining a positive reputation. Additionally, a positive ethos is essential to success as a leader and is critical in leadership communication.

Role of communication and leadership are associated important elements. Qian, Y. and Jian, G. (2020) conducted study about the theoretical analysis on the mediating process highlighted the role of communication towards facilitating the influence of leadership, and also in constructing identification of organization. Barrett (2006) initially defined the perspective of Communication Leadership by considering it a purposeful, regulated meaning transfer by which leaders influenced a community, an organization, a group, or single person. Afterwards, a communicative leader was considered one that is involved and open, practices participatory choice making, actively seeks and shares feedback and engages the staff in dialogue (Johansson et al., 2014). Another discussion has focused on the subject of communication department

leadership that includes the development and analysis of skills and competencies for upcoming communication leaders.

Findings have shown that future leaders require different competencies beyond creative and communication skills, including analytical and managerial skills (Berger & Meng, 2014; Falkheimer et al., 2017). A correlation exists between the two. According to Watson (2007), the key objective of leadership is reputation management where the chief spokesperson is the CEO. This remark has fully supported by Barrett. More complex communications, such as those that affect the entire organization, the organization need different communicators for different audiences and messages, and it will need to select the spokespersons carefully (Barrett, 2014).

Barrett also mentioned about the Communication Leadership of CEOs and other senior management team. As a leader, they should be able to communicate effectively (Barrett, 2006). This is critically important as they could improve the reputation, performance of their groups and organizations. Communication Leadership features three major rings. It comprises corporate communication, managerial communication, and core communication. The higher a manager climbs the corporate ladder, the more challenging her/his communication needs become. In brief, the ability of core communication extended to cover managerial communication. Subsequently, the communication abilities featured in the wider scope of corporate communication.

Additionally, several studies have debated the significance associated with Communication Leadership and highlighted the role it plays in enhancing alignment with attainment of reliable corporate performance, implementation strategy, and stakeholders (Hamrefors, 2010; Fairhurst, 2011). A literature review undertaken in the past few years recommended the focus to be directed to leadership as diverse communication phenomena across the globe alongside its constructive feature (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Additionally, scholars have located the need for studies on co-worker communication and Communication Leadership empowerment (Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Welch, 2011). Communicative leadership that public and private organizations employ showed the significance of Communication Leadership and compares it to the performance of the organization via co-worker empowerment and involvement (Nordblom & Hamrefors, 2007).

There are extensive researches exploring the leader's role in strategic communication. For instance, Argenti's (2017) study on communicative leadership within companies had a correlation with the strategy implementation. Zeffass and Viertmann's (2017) study focused on the importance of the rare impetus arising from corporate communication. Another scenario is the organization's overall strategic objective (Grunig 2006; Riel V. 2012; Argenti 2016). Also, studies on the strategic management functions of

communication division had a correlation with strategic decision participation (Grunig et al., 2002; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009; Brønn, 2014; Argenti, 2016).

Berger and Meng (2014) and Falkheimer et al.'s (2017) studies of leadership within the department of communication, including development and analysis of skills and competencies constitute another example. Likewise, according to Grunig et al.'s (2002) study, departments of communication must be empowered as top management members to make strategic contributions towards corporate success. In addition, mental and physical proximity towards the CEO were considered key success factors within future research (Fombrun & Riel, 2007; Argenti, 2016).

Chan and Hasan (2018) undertook a study that explored corporate leadership and reputation. However, the focus was on the correlation between CSR practices among higher institutions, particularly regarding corporate reputation, leadership style, and job satisfaction among employees. Details of previous studies pertaining to the Corporate Reputation and Communication Leadership are summarized in Table 1.0 (in Chapter 2: "Research Pertaining to Corporate Reputation" and Table 6.0, (in Chapter 2: "Research Pertaining to Leadership Communication") respectively. Previously, there was a study Deborah Goldring, (2015). The study was pertaining to Reputation orientation viewed from improvement of marketing performance through corporate reputation building. It was an online-survey involved 2,900 comprising managers from a variety of for-profit industries of US-based marketing.

There was also a study exploring public-listed corporations (PLC) and government-linked companies (GLC). Nevertheless, the Abdullah and Abdul Aziz's (2013) study mainly focused on designing corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures in Asia on the premise of David's dual process model; the study specifically examined government-linked companies (GLCs) alongside public-listed corporations (PLCs). Previous studies related to Government-linked Companies are summarized in Table 7.0. However, above all, there is scant research exploring the Communication Leadership and how it could enhance credibility as well as improve corporate reputation. In view of this, this unexplored subject within the context of government control and connected media firms is critical and worth investigating.

Fombrun and van Riel (1997) stated that reputation reflects the identity of the firm as well as a recap of its past performance assessment. It is obtained from several correlated company images among the stakeholders of the firm. Reputation constitutes social-shared impressions, a consensus regarding how a company would behave in a particular scenario (Bromley, 2002; Sandberg, 2002). Additionally, corporate reputation is considered the organization's objective reality, though outside observers hold and subjectively create it (Lange et al. 2011). Another study by Deephouse (2000) stated that failure to fulfill or meeting expectations have significant influence on the reputation of corporations. Here, the reputation of the company is premised on the perceived

capacity of fulfilling roles that the public anticipates from corporations, thus, such anticipations could feature in the criteria for determining corporate reputation (Davies, 2016).

In the past few years, Argarwal et al. (2015) stressed that evaluation was the key towards comprehending corporate reputation. In cases where an unobservable (latent) variable existing within the minds of observers and organizational stakeholders, corporate reputation constitutes a collective component (Fombrun & Rindova, 2005), not just the CEO – who serves as the main corporate communicator (Bennis, 1997), but by the chief/C-level officers (that is, CCO, CIO, CMO, COO, and CFO) that are not solely there to complement the CEO, but to provide their impetus and insights in important choices (Groysberg, Kelly & MacDonald, 2011).

Corporate communication might acquire wide recognition from top management and also raise communication department budgets (Abdullah, 2009). In the study by Zerfass et al. (2016), senior executives are regarded as a major antecedent of corporate reputation. Similarly, the CEO might require the support of corporate communication specialists to design programs for external and internal stakeholders through means that are aligned with corporate identity (Kitchen & Laurence, 2003). Additionally, Abdullah (2009) stated that the key role that corporate communications played, including public relation in nurturing an ideal corporation constitutes the major antecedent of business success.

According to Abdullah (2007) many companies in Asia have close links with the government pertaining to licensing and setting regulations that include certain organizational policies. Because of that, the interest in the proposed study constitute CEOs of government-connected media firms, which seem to be characterized by two functions, initially, as the leader of GLCs and second as the mass media firm leader. This structured-linked is interconnected. According to Barrett (2014), structurally, operationally and culturally, communication has to be compatible and complement within organization. Each company has its structural features, which influence how CEOs should operate (Gabbioneta, Greenwood, Mazzola & Minoja, 2013). As far as aligned in institutional view's expectation, a CEO has two roles to play. (Anuar, 2005). He added that in certain circumstances, it could create controversial, mainly involving politician of the state-owned media. And as an institute, mass media, is ideally non-partisan, objective, and independent (Street, 2011).

In a past study by Scott (2001), it was found that CEOs constituted actors in structured institutions who shape their interests and identities. In view of this, enactment of dual institutional functions might imply a focal division (Pinder & Usherwood, 2013) that could be crucial towards legitimizing the use of particular business and corporate strategies because of other relations in the industry (Nordqvist, Picard & Pesamaa, 2010; Papaioannou, Watkins, Kale & Mugwagwa, 2015). Another study by Rothwell (2010) clarified that the role of

CEOs might be imperative towards winning the trust of corporate boards or stakeholders (Rivero, 2004). From the angle of stakeholders' expectation, Kelley, K.J. and Thams, Y. (2019) argued that the value of reputation is determined by the ability towards meeting the expectations of stakeholders with respect to what they as an audience perceive as important.

Several different media frequently use by an organization. According to Barrett (2014), it purposefully used towards reaching out audiences, externally. It also depends on the magnitude and importance of event related to communication. In this context of study, legislatively, according to Alsagoff et al. (2011), bodies within the media industry which the regulatory authorities recognize have operationalized voluntary practice codes concerning different issues associated with regulations. For example, the introduction of National Communication and Multimedia Policy was intended to promote the creation of self-regulatory mechanisms that reduce regulation costs while simultaneously offering clear guidelines for industry behavior consistent with the policy objectives of the government. CEO has to look into the aspect of government policy and regulatory etc. and at the same time, in taking a leading role for business survival etc. It's also considerably as a prime issue mainly due to the existence of the new technological system in the media industry.

1.2 Communication and Corporate Reputation

Kitchen and Laurence (2003) summarized that an unregulated, uncoordinated, and unplanned communication would affect bottom, middle and top lines, thus explaining why companies alongside those authorized to represent them should be/ must from corporate communication. Neill's (2015) study identified and expanded a set of dimension-specific specialties linked to corporate communication, which include government relations, internal communications, reputation management, social media, content writing, crisis communication, and media relations.

Identifying the aforementioned components helps in distributing communication responsibilities other than the Chief Communication Officer (CCO) in a calculated and systematic manner. Bad performances are likely to occur when one cannot communicate effectively because of lacking proper communication skills (Murugesan & Mohd Hasan, 2016). Indeed, this is in correlation between a specific C-level executive's expertise and the context of communication.

Corporate reputation could be considered a sophisticated venture (Watson, 2010), and does not constitute an issue of self-aggrandizing or slogan building (Martin & Burke, 2012). According to Watson (2010), the existence of reputation is not premised on chances; rather it is interlinked to feedback mechanisms, communication activities, stakeholder relations, organizational operations, management, and leadership. Several studies have explored such correlations between reputation and communication (Yamauchi, 2001; Kitchen

& Laurence, 2003; Forman & Argenti, 2005; Neill, 2015). Forman and Argenti's (2005) exploratory study was influenced by the assumption that the reputation of the firm is dependent on the effective nature of corporate communication functions.

From the sociological perspective, reputations constitute legitimacy parameters and are a symbol of institutional prestige (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1998 in Balmer & Greyser, 2003, p. 229). With such knowledge, legitimacy escalates the reputation of the organization (Abdullah & Abdul Aziz, 2013). For that reason, it is important in this study to address the issue on how CEO and other senior management team as a communication leader towards improving corporate reputation as a tangible asset, specifically in the context of communication and media Government-linked Company.

1.3 Communication Leadership.

Specifically, communication by CEOs and other senior management team play an important managerial role within their companies. This could be seen as it's premised on two domains: Communication Leadership and organizational leadership. On this fact, leaders need to consider their purpose, strategy, and structure in the communication process (Barrett, 2014). Previously, there was an inextricable link between leadership enactment and communication. According to Barrett (2006), Communication Leadership refers to the purposeful, regulated shift of meaning through which managers' potential could influence a community, a company, a group, or person.

According to Barge and Hirokawa (1989, p.172), leadership occurs via communication and interaction processes. In the past 10 years, communication perspectives in the research of leadership focused upon discursive, relational, and socially co-constructed leadership aspects (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Kramer & Crespy, 2011; Fairhurst, 2007). Moving away from research tradition that focus on charisma, styles, and traits of individual leaders, leadership could be regarded as relational phenomena, co-constructed within the social interaction among individuals serving in context (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Over the years, several scholars have stressed the important role that communication plays in leadership (Tourish & Jackson, 2008, Fairhurst, 2011, Barge, 1994). Another discussion has pertained to the subject of leadership within communication divisions, including skill and competency development and analysis.

Additionally, Johansson et al., (2014) stressed the concept of communicative leaders carry the aspect of quality. Leaders that are communicative do not merely communicate, which all members and leaders of organizations do frequently but their co-workers consider good communicators. Moreover, the assumption implies that assessment and development of communication competence could be achieved (Johansson et al., 2014). Within the scientific

literature, the communicative leadership concept has solely been utilized for discussing the role that communication divisions play in organizations, as well as how communication experts add impetus to external efficiency by engaging in leadership (Hamrefors, 2010). In view of this, corporate reputation and Communication Leadership in the context of the current study pertains to new elements that require in-depth exploration.

Applying the aforementioned descriptions to context of the study, it is presumed that CEO manages and mediates Communication Leadership by engaging C-level executives in honing their communication skills to enable them become effective communicators and corporate reputation vanguards. Yukl (2012) classifies effective behaviors in leadership and include networking, supporting, and problem solving and clarifying. Consistent with this viewpoint, Johansson et al. (2014) explored four common categories of leader communication behavior namely unit representation, relational dynamics, facilitating work, and initiating structure.

According to Harrison and Muhlberg (2013), Communication Leadership refers to a shared task/effort between CCO and CEO. Even though, the two are considered communication leaders, the CCO takes the leading role whereas the individual that is responsible for managing/conceiving the flow of information and content, for explaining shared and corporate cultures in enhancing productive performance and attitude levels, and for influencing/engaging the firm's stakeholders. In view of this, reputation management is another key objective for leadership communication. According to Watson (2007), such scenario allows the CEO to assume the chief spokesperson role. This is another issue that need to be addressed. For that reason, this is important for the CEO and senior management team as a communication leader within the company to collectively identify and internalize the value of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation.

1.4 Institutionalized Role Orientation

Towards further discovery of theory, the institutional theory is considered ideal in explaining the roles of CEOs. On the basis of institutional theory, Abdullah and Aziz (2013) posit that all organizations are bound to follow the informal and formal rules. It is consistent with the view that the role of the CEO is entrenched within the social institution of regulative, cognitive, and normative social processes, which legitimize the concepts as well as functions connected with the role (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Amenta & Ramsey, 2009). Such elements/processes when transformed into expectations could exert pressure on CEOs to behave or react in a legitimate manner (Mutizwa, 2015). Deviating from institutional structure that might unsuccessfully lead to extensive acceptance might be met with criticism.

For fear of potential reprisal, a CEO might instead, react by adhering to such expectations or copying business models that are successful (DellaPosta et al., 2016) to retain consistency and stability amidst uncertainty. Therefore, within institutionalized orientation, conformity and obedience to norms and rules is encouraged. Individuals are sensitized to react in a similar manner that current organizational members would react (Jones, 2013). This might account for the similarities that characterize companies in a particular field (Palthe, 2014). Organizational isomorphism is the process through which companies within a field become similar (Jones, 2013).

From the perspective of neo-institutional theory, companies seem to react in line with whatever constitutes virtuous conduct for that particular situation and environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). When influenced by external and internal pressures (inclusive of uncertainties), companies might adopt some habits and adopt approaches, structures, and strategies from other organizations, due to the notion that doing so would increase their success/survival chances (Jones, 2013). Therefore, as more companies initiate similar approaches in the field, the more similarities between them increase (Amenta & Ramsey, 2009). Such creation of similarities within structures or processes between companies (isomorphism) grew due to normative, mimetic (benchmark, mimic, copy) and coercive (societal and regulatory pressures) processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The aforementioned processes developed with time. Their cause and effect structures underpin the operational correlation located within organization communities (Strang & Meyer, 1993). In view of this, isomorphism could shed light on the framework of government-owned media firms as an autonomous institution and a system. When used on proposed research, isomorphism could help account for differences and similarities that characterize communication approaches (Fredriksson et al., 2013), which communication and media Government-linked companies adopt in to tackling external and internal pressure. Overall, reaction to qualitative investigation might also result in identifying the nature and source arising from such pressures.

Within the area of CEO positioning and communication, Zerfass, Vercic, and Wiesenberg (2016) employed the neo-institutional theory in highlighting the interactions that characterize organizations, society, and media. Towards offering an explanation on the link between the media and society, normative institutionalism theory is chosen. Apart from its association to neo-institutionalism, and being its sub-field, it explains the role of the media based on the guidance of institution's formal rules and norms. Regarding democratic governance of the media, Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2007) applied the normative perspectives in ascertaining the objectives and roles that the media renders as well as the institutional arrangements put in place to comprehend the antecedents of the media in the fulfillment of the aforementioned objectives and rules. In investigating the significance of communication performance and public opinion to reputation, Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) applied neo-

institutionalism to nurture their assumptions regarding the sophisticated interactions between communication, organization, and society as the agency.

In responding to the research question that explored the expectations/perceptions of CEOs and members of the executive board regarding the significance of public opinion as well as the mediating function of corporate communications to success and organizational reputation, Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) explored some communication performance antecedents; they include, sense of participation from senior executives as well as the impression that they have a personal responsibility for communication, personal engagement as the communicator by senior executives and CEOs, a comprehension of their roles as communication experts by those complementing the CEO, personal communication that stresses the CEO's communicative role, and shared expectations as major enabler of effective communications.

Based on the aforementioned, Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) posit that some form of institutionalization over organizational processes, beliefs, norms, and values is required to attain better communication performance, which adds impetus towards nurturing trust, image, and good reputation consistently. The study by Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) provided some evidence indicating that diverse mindsets, perceptions, and views of CEOs and senior executives, weakens the alignment between agents and principles within corporate communications. In this context of study, reputation constitutes part of the process of corporate positioning that necessitates consistency (among the senior officers) and an open idea as the competitive edge or core competency (Deephouse, 2000; Schreiber, 2002).

A media firm practically features content producers that communicate via creations through mass media. Media firms retain several standards, upon which corporate reputation is premised. Notably, companies should meet their stakeholder, legal, economic obligations. Particularly, a firm should undertake its business in the policy and legal framework of the country where it is operational (Chan et al., 2015). In most cases, the major antecedents for new organizations include impartiality (denoted within their products), autonomy, and accuracy (Riordan, 2014). Media ownership alongside other matters such as financial sustenance and funding do nonetheless present threats (perceived or real bias) to media integrity and independence. The media outlet chief executive officers (CEOs) are not spared of biased attribution through political association or affinity.

Within the country's context, local media has an obligation and expectation to serve as a crucial supporting system to the ruling government. The media has been the forefront machinery in promoting and disseminating the mandate of the government. This has encouraged and compelled the media to raise their integrity to demonstrate their accountability, transparency, and openness to the public in conveying the media content regarding the visionary agenda to create

a democratic, mature, and caring society equipped with reliable standards of ethics (Alsagoff, 2016).

For the chief executive officers of communication and media Government-linked companies that are characterized by inherent structures, the perception of partiality by the masses might be more daunting. Conceivable connections might adversely affect the credibility of the media and contribute towards other reputational setbacks that media firms encounter. Towards improving and sustaining corporate reputation, the CEO leadership within corporate communication is essential. Through direct means, the CEO assumes the responsibility of management in supervising how communication in the corporate world should be done. Through indirect means, the CEO represents the main communicator and his/her role is emblematic, because CEO reputation and corporate reputation might usually be considered interlinked within the public perspective (Kitchen & Laurence, 2003).

However, whatever the CEO displays within the public is a reflection of the government in power to which the role of the CEO of a government –owned media firm is connected nominally. This is another pertinent gap which significantly exist in the context of communication and media Government-linked company. Therefore, this study could help address the issue on how the CEO and senior management team demonstrate their role as Communication Leadership in improving credibility and enhancing the reputation of the company.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

During the process of nurturing reputation, it is worth noting that only leaders are better placed to help firms obtain reputational capital (an intangible resource) through regular communication with different constituents and behavioral complexity. In the process of nurturing reputation, it is worth noting that only leaders are better placed to help firms obtain reputational capital (an intangible resource) through regular communication with different constituents and behavioral complexity. Indeed, it is imperative to have good reputation in terms of quality and overall performance from the Communication Leadership perspective. According to Barrett (2014), leaders have to employ their Communication Leadership in the internal communication. In the same scenario, Johansson et al. (2014) posit that Communication Leadership concept is characterized by an aspect of quality. In view of this, Communication Leadership by senior management team and resource institutionalization and internalization constitute the pillars for gaining and managing reputation.

Within the scientific studies, the communicative leadership concept has solely been utilized for discussing the role that communication departments play in companies, as well as how communication experts contribute towards to the outside effectiveness by taking part in leadership (Hamrefors, 2010). Scientific

literature did not provide an in depth exploration of reputation. Abdullah and Aziz's (2011) study explored GLCs and reputation. However, the aspect of Communication Leadership was not examined in their study. The study sought to extensively locate the correlation between important concepts, including CSR, stakeholder relations, and corporate reputation from the marketing and corporate communication viewpoint.

A literature review undertaken by Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) proposed that leadership should be perceived as a broad global communication phenomenon alongside its constructive aspects. Theoretically, in view of this, reputation is pertinent key issue for leadership communication. As a leader, such scenario allows the CEO to assume the chief spokesperson role (Watson, 2007). This is an issue that need to be addressed. For that reason, this is important for the CEO and senior management team who are playing role communication leader within the company to collectively share and internalize the value of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation.

Towards improving and sustaining corporate reputation, the CEO and senior management leadership within corporate communication is essential. Directly, the CEO assumes the responsibility of management in supervising how communication in the corporate setting should be correctly undertaking. Indirectly, the CEO and senior management team are representing as the leading communicator. Their role is emblematic, because, according to Kitchen & Laurence (2003), CEO reputation and corporate reputation might usually be considered interlinked within the public perspective.

In assessing the feasibility of this study and theoretical discovery, the Institutional Theory was found most relevant towards the development of the study framework. It explains the role of the CEO more satisfactorily. Under this theory, the CEO role is embedded in the social institution that evolves around normative and regulative social processes that legitimize the concept and the functions attached to the role. This theory is pertinent in view of the structural preconditions that govern and provide the communication and media Government-linked company their legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). A precedent study by Zerfass, Vercic and Wiesenbergl (2015) has used neo-institutional theories in explaining the interactions involved between the media, society and organisations from the context of CEO communication and positioning.

Therefore, it can be said that the above shows existing gap that need to be addressed particularly from the aspect of Communication Leadership that was not examined previously, specifically in the context of communication and media government-linked company. The key objective of Communication Leadership is management of reputation within corporate crises wherein the CEO takes a leading role as the chief spokesperson (Watson, 2007). Generally, organizations form dedicated teams to tackle media concerns and

proactively give them relevant information correctly as it potentially associated accidental loss of reputation. Relationship between leader and media is highly important. According to Barrett (2014), it is important for a leader of an organizations to establish a positive relationship with the media. As a leader, he/she should know how to work effectively with them. They also know the importance of media, how and when to talk and encounter them. She also mentioned that as a leader, media should be viewed as critical, because different media is determined by different situations.

In line with this, previously, Anuar, M.K. (2000, 2005, and 2008) investigated the correlation between mass media and the state from the political viewpoint; however, corporate reputation in mass media firms was not cited. Abbott's (2011) study on Malaysian print media and electoral authoritarianism, has reported a significant existence of pro-government biases in certain newspaper. The study cites corporate ownership alongside its perceived effect, the existing legislative framework as well as absence of critical reporting as the causes of such bias, which could be accounted for by common social, political, and cultural values entrenched within institutional contexts.

Media and communication are strongly linked or associated together. According to Barrett (2014), in certain culture of the organization, it will affect the expectations within favorable media communication. As mentioned, the correlation between mass media, GLCs, the governing party, and the state in Malaysia were associated with adverse public attitudes towards different mainstream media outlets (Anuar, 2005). The trend between the social and political environment, the media which governed by the law, the control and the ownership in this country, the deep analysis of mass media in Malaysia revealed that the looking is not that encouraging (Anuar, 2000). Additionally, a mutual reinforce tend to occur due to well established and close relation from the perspective of economic, cultural and political interests, owners of the media and the elite who ruling the country (Anuar, 2008).

It is thought that the government still has significant control over print media as opposed to electronic media; additionally, it has significant influence through impositions of limits on the content of media (Alsagoff, 2016). Kim (2001) had examined the basis of mass media control of government in this country. Government regulation over the mass media, is under the guise of national security and political stability (Anuar, 2005). It has come under criticism for serving as the means through which the credibility and freedom of the media is undermined. Reliability/credibility constitutes the level to which the recipient of the message considers conveyed information believable and factual (Miller, 2005). Mass media trustworthiness and credibility are indispensable to the reputation of corporations (Armstrong & McAdams, 2009; Oyedeji, 2006).

Abbott (2011) has undertaken a quantitative analysis to determine pro-government bias. He posited that two Malay-language newspapers exhibited a strong bias towards the governing regime and that corporate ownership

coupled with legislative pressure connected many Malaysian newspapers indirectly and directly to the smaller political parties within the ruling coalition. With the Government of Malaysia directly controlling huge stakes, government-owned media firms would seem to be more vulnerable to state interference and political influence as opposed to their privately-owned counterparts. In view of this, leadership within the specific organization structure has implications for communication and reputation. In short, an inextricable link exists between leadership enactment, communication and reputation.

Constant provision of information to news media enhances the possibility of coverage, which earns the firm a good reputation. Simply put, Eisenegger and Imhof (2008, p. 130) considered corporate reputation the trustworthy reputation such that to nurture reputation, the minimum pre-condition must be trustworthiness. Companies, which are characterized by sound leadership teams alongside ideal mission and visions can sustain and improve the firm's capital reputation directly. According to Barrett (2014), leaders by the ethos they project for instance in their communication, actions, character, behavior, knowledge. Additionally, a company's credibility is proportionally direct to the leadership skills that enable it to maintain recognition and superior position within the market. A credible and authentic reputation helps in forming networks with various stakeholders who could be considered external and internal (Carroll, 2016). To be viewed as credible, leader must perceive as trustworthy, honest, confident, authoritative and knowledgeable. As a leader of an organization who guide and lead their employees, leader need to be trusted by the employees and credibility (Barrett, 2014). Leaders who have authenticity and credibility develop confidence and trust.

In view of this, and in regard to reputation of companies, this research will helps towards understanding how chief executive officers (CEOs) discharge their responsibilities as media leaders and political appointees through means, which do not undermine the reputation and credibility of the companies they represent. For the above reason, the contributions of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation which an important asset of a communication and media company is need to be clearly identified/explored.

Rapid growth in communication, globally, has been made from the advancement in new communication technology. Peoples have connectivity with organizations through varieties of technology (Barrett, 2014). As a result, it provides a powerful impact on information flow in many companies. New technology has change the landscape of communication. For instance, social media has changed the face of communication in almost aspects. Globally, it has made major changes, for instance in the aspect of politic (Barrett, 2014). Additionally, in the context of this country, according to Alsagoff et al. (2011), the new technological setting in Malaysia has created challenges and conflicts. While the criticism on the quality of certain mass media might be regarded as credible, there is scant information that might explain how government-owned media firms preserve their corporate reputation amidst different relations between agencies and actors regulated by institutional contexts surrounding it

(Lanczi & O'Neil, 1996) Leaders of organizations use all appropriate communication media either through social networks or any other interactive social media.

Therefore, it can be said that due to the presence of new technology and government control on communication and media, these give indications on the existing gap on how CEO and senior management team of communication and media Government-linked companies manage and institutionalize corporate reputation and leadership communication.

Communication with employees is considered as one of the major responsibilities of a leader of an organization. For instance, employee motivation and organizational direction and depends on effective communication, internally. The communication flows and communication with employees in an organization need important attention. (Barrett, 2014). Generally, organization has a very strict communication chain and hierarchy. In this context, and in some instances, structured institutions with double roles present a conflict. According to Eriksen (1997), the structure of the organization institutionalizes a procedure for solving common problems. Additionally, communication function institutionalization of other corporate roles, including information technology, human resources, and finance (Swerling & Sen, 2009, p. 134).

Clearly, corporate structure determines what should be as well as how communication of information should be undertaken. Regarding managing and positioning corporate communication, the communication and media Government-linked companies might adopt practices and forms, which are not similar to their non-government –owned companies because of variations with their ownership structures.

For any organization to success, internal communication is highly important. Leaders need to demonstrate clearly that they are considered a good communication. Therefore, their internal communication must be effective (Barrett, 2014). Communication professionals should demonstrate leadership to facilitate their integration into the company and the company should exhibit leadership to enable its integration into its settings (Tench et al., 2017).

Reputation management constitutes an emerging and new corporate communication function and is utilized as a managerial tool and a strategic tactic in companies (Abdullah, 2009). According to Carroll (2016), corporate reputation is hinged on organizational leadership. The reputation of the firm could be evaluated based on its governance, services and products, innovation, culture, citizenship, leadership, and financial performance. Nevertheless, leadership constitutes an important factor, which governs others.

According to Barrett (2014), every employee together with total commitment of the organization's leaders involve in shaping a positive reputation. Additionally, it requires an external relations strategy that is comprehensive, vigorous and vigilant towards managing media and press. As an Intangible assets, corporate reputation play an important role in achieving competitive edge (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Rao *et al.*, 2004; Tran *et al.*, 2015). In the study conducted by Abdullah and Aziz (2013), it was inferred that reputation management was important for companies in Malaysia, on the basis of the strategic programs of the company.

The above statements provide hints and indications about the existing gap in the context of corporate structure and reputation of communication and media government linked company. The CEO and senior management team play an important role as they are the communication leader of the company they are presenting. Therefore, it is important to address issue and examine on how to internalize the value of COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP towards improving corporate reputation of communication and media Government-linked companies.

Overall, it could be inferred that all the aforementioned statements point to the existence of gaps that should be filled and issues that need to be examined in the area of corporate communication, especially towards improvement of corporate reputation and leadership communication; and how communication leader would demonstrate the leadership towards enhancing the credibility of communication and media Government-linked companies in this country. In view of this, the study will immensely add impetus to the literature within the subject being investigated.

1.6 Objective of the study

Given the perceived impact of pro-government bias, the purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature by studying how the CEOs are addressing issues of biases, protect and improving their reputation through corporate communication. The aim is to explore how the CEOs of communication and media Government-linked companies enact their roles as communication leaders and to inquire how their corporate communication schemas are structured and managed. The study can offer insights, perspectives and concepts on structures and practices of communication and media Government-linked companies in managing, and improving corporate reputation through Communication Leadership which regards as a valuable asset.

Based on the problem statement, the research questions of this study are as follows:

1.7 Research Questions

- 1) How do you communicate as a communication leader towards improving corporate reputation as an asset of communication and media Government-linked company at the same time?
- 2) How do you demonstrate Communication Leadership in improving credibility of firm?
- 3) How do you internalize the value of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation?

General Objectives: The objective of this study is to examine how CEOs, as a leader of communication and media Government-linked company, apply Communication Leadership addressing/ improving corporate reputation.

1.8 Research Objectives

This study will capture from the narratives reflecting how CEOs use or tends to use *leadership* to inspire other C-level executives or senior managements team to become communication leaders in their own domains, and address reputational strategies/challenges as one team. The aim is to identify who among the C-level executives or senior managements team are involved in the corporate communication team and how each one describes his/her role. The narrative data will be analyzed, interpreted and reported as findings. Therefore, the specific objectives of this study are:

- 1) To determine how leader communicate towards improving corporate reputation as an asset of communication and media Government-linked company at the same time.
- 2) To identify how leader demonstrate Communication Leadership in improving credibility of firm.
- 3) To identify how leader internalize the value of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation.

1.9 Significance of the study

Given to these underlined research questions and focused objectives the present study aspires to make a significant contribution and additional to the body of knowledge in the field of corporate communication, specifically in the area of corporate reputation and leadership communication, in the context of government-linked media organization. Also, the study will be an addition to the existing literature on corporate communication in the local Malaysian context focused among the leading communication and media Government-linked companies, which is lacking so far. Probably unprecedented, its completion may bring forward new knowledge on, for example, the management structure

of corporate communication and corporate reputation in communication and media Government-linked company. If the study succeeds in addressing the research questions, the findings may significantly inspire future research in Communication Leadership that still has a vast unexplored area.

Methodologically, the qualitative methods in depth interview approach will be utilized in this research. The focus will be senior management team members of communication and media Government-linked company who are taking a leading and communication role in the corporate communication division. The informants aged between 25 to 50 years old holding a position as Chief Executive Officer, Head of Division and Managers. These group of interviewees will provide insights significantly in the context of a how communication leader communicate towards improving corporate reputation as an asset of Government-linked media organization. As a leader, they will also will responding on how communication could enhance and improve credibility of the company they are representing. Additionally, they will share their insight on how communication leader internalize the value of Communication Leadership towards improving corporate reputation. With all the questions successfully addressed and answered, it will certainly contribute and add on to the knowledge of the researching topic.

Towards assessing the feasibility of this study and theoretical discovery, the institutional theory was found to be relevant that could help in the development of the study framework and explain the role of the CEO more satisfactorily. Under this theory, the CEO role is embedded in the social institution that evolves around normative and regulative social processes that legitimize the concept and the functions attached to the role. This theory is pertinent in view of the structural preconditions that govern and give the communication and media Government-linked company their legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). A precedent study by Zerfass, Vercic and Wiesenber (2015) has used neo-institutional theories in explaining the interactions involved between the media, society and organisations in relation to CEO communication and positioning.

Towards explaining the relationship between society and the media, the theory of normative institutionalism was selected. Aside from its affinity with, and being a sub-field of neo-institutionalism, it provides an explanation over what the media ought to be doing as it is being guided by certain norms and formal rules of institutions that guide their actions. In a study on media governance, Puppis (2010) chose the neo-sociological institutionalism theory to explain the rules that aim to organize media systems. On democratic media governance, Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2007) cited the normative positions in determining the role and objectives rendered by the media, and cited the institutional arrangements towards understanding what directs the media to fulfill those rules and objectives. In relation to corporate reputation, the theory of expectations, as akin to institutional theory and its sub-constructs, will be explored to further ascertain its applicability.

Based on the expectation theory, meeting or failing to meet expectations has an impact on the corporate's reputation (Deephouse, 2000). Nonetheless, the study approaches corporate reputation as an independent variable and in a non-prescriptive manner. Thereby, the degree of corporate sensitivity to reputation and how a particular communication and media Government-linked companies would regard the quality of reputation they are attaining or still attempting to achieve are exclusive. It regardless of standards comparisons available on how reputation should be shaped. The small-scale review of the literature made apparent the applicability and sufficiency of the institutional theory and its sub-fields to explain the roles of the CEO and of the media to society, the arrangements that guide their behaviors and actions. It also towards how reputation may be interpreted as mediated by expectations (i.e. stakeholders' and audience/readers' expectations).

It is greatly hoped that this study will be an eye opener and as a turning point for the government, specifically to revisit and relook at the policy level, particularly at the communication and media Government-linked companies. In the context of this research, the previous studies pertaining to Government-linked companies were focused for examples on the correlation between CSR practices among higher institutions, particularly regarding corporate reputation, leadership style, and job satisfaction among employees Chan and Hasan (2018). There was also an exploration study on the PLC and GLC. Abdullah and Abdul Aziz's (2013) study mainly focused on designing corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures in Asia on the premise of David's dual process model; the study specifically examined government-linked companies (GLCs) alongside public-listed corporations (PLCs). Having said that, the amount of literature available on leadership communication, credibility and enhancement of corporate reputation specifically form the context of communication and media Government-linked companies need more attention, particularly from the policy makers or government.

1.10 Scope and limitation of the study

A qualitative study is employed in order to fully explore and obtain elaborative information through face-to-face interviews. A broad spectrum of preliminary questioning is anticipated before narrowing down to the core questions. The preliminary questions will be directed to establish important industry backgrounds, more particularly in relation to the challenges they face regarding media bias and how they confront such and other issues. The core questions will also contain a series of semi-structured questions that directly addresses the research question/s.

In order to answer the research questions, meet and address the research objectives, the scope and focus of this paper represents a first contribution to analyzing the several features of CEO and communication department in the context of corporate reputation, Communication Leadership that have not yet been fully investigated, especially in the Malaysian context. Additionally, the scope of study will be on the communication and media Government-linked

companies only. There are number of studies being conducted previously. However, as indicated in Table 6.0, the research topics didn't specifically on on Communication Leadership and corporate reputation of communication and media Government-linked companies. The studies are more on the non-GLCs media and on the different topics such as financial performance "The Financial Performance of GLCs and Non-GLCs in Malaysia", Hartini Binti Mohd Nasir, (2017); "Board Characteristics and Firm Performance: Malaysia's Government-Linked Companies (GLCS) Compliance to Green Book", Rahman, N. A., & Razali, M. W. M. (2019) etc.

With the coincidence of political situation in the country during the study, the number of participation of informants were indirectly limited. They were reluctant of participatory aspects due to "uncomfortable" to be interviewed. The number of participation were also limited due to the exercise of business activities among the shortlisted/invited companies. Some of the companies are undergoing regional business rationalization such as merger and acquisition practices either with local and foreign counterparts.

The other limitations of this study also include the circumscribed sample (due to the difficulty in surveying CEOs directly) and the lack of various background variables that are needed to substantiate the suggested links between engagement in communication activities and longevity. In addition, it is necessary to point out that this study is focus on the GLC context, characterized by some peculiarities, such as the specialization in media industries qualitatively.

In short, the scope and limitation are summarized as follows:

- 1) Limited to investigating the role of CEOs and senior management team of Corporate Communication department/CEO office in managing leadership communication, communication and corporate reputation structurally, at the government-linked media companies only. It's not from private sectors.
- 2) Limited to company located in Klang Valley. Where the location is the capital hub of the country housing extensive mass media enterprises.
- 3) Limited to government-linked media companies related to mass media companies/industry.
- 4) It's a qualitative interview of leader in an organization; hence this study does not provide any quantitative data related to the topic.

1.11 Definition of Keywords

1.11.1 Institutionalizing

Institutionalizing can be defined as an establishment of something, activity or practice which regards as norm in the context of a culture or in an organization. Additionally, it could be a respected or permanently a portion of system, organization or society. According to Meyer et al. (1994), institutionalizing is a process “which a pattern of activities or, a given set of units cognitively and normatively held in place, practically taken for granted as lawful”.

In this context of study, the researcher will specifically explore towards understand how the CEOs and senior management team of communication and media Government-linked companies enact their roles as communication leaders. Subsequently, it helps to inquire how their corporate communication schemas are structured and managed. With that, the study is expected in providing insights, perspectives and concepts on structures and practices of Government-linked media companies in managing, and improving corporate reputation through Communication Leadership which regards as a valuable asset.

1.11.2 Managing

Managing can be defined as controlling, governing or handling action or use. It is also about influencing or dominating, taking charge or caring of something purposefully to succeed in achieving task etc. particularly in an organization, business or employees. According to Kent at.al. (2001), managing can be defined as a process involving 4 activities which are coordinating, controlling, organizing and planning. In this context of study, the researcher will specifically explore towards understand how the CEOs and senior management team of Government-linked media companies play their roles as leader in communication specifically in a structured organization.

1.11.3 Government-linked companies

Government-linked companies (GLC) is a corporation that is owned by the government constitutes a legal institution that a government creates to initiate commercial activities at the expense of the owner Amin (2014). There are variations in their legitimate status from constituting a portion of government towards stock firms with the regular stockholder being the state.

In this context of study, the researcher will specifically explore and understand how CEO and senior management team of Government-linked media companies enact their roles and apply Communication Leadership in improving corporate reputation in GLCs in Malaysia. Finally, the gap could be filled in the area of corporate communication, especially as it pertains to improvement of Communication Leadership and corporate reputation in the GLCs in Malaysia.



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