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# A Children's Music Ensemble as a Relational Communication Environment: A Public Relations Perspective

## Komunikacja relacyjna w dziecięcym zespole muzycznym: Mikrospołeczna perspektywa public relations wobec zaufania, wspólnoty i reputacji

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**Abstract**

**Aim.** Children's music ensembles combine artistic education with relationships among children, parents, and instructors. This study examines such an ensemble as a Relational Communication Environment (RCE). It investigates relationships among perceived organizational communication quality, trust, value transmission, interpersonal relationships, sense of community, and organizational reputation. The theoretical framework integrates the relational paradigm of public relations with pedagogy, social capital theory, communicative action theory, and music education research. The study also proposes RCE as an analytical concept for community-based organizations in which everyday communication sustains relationships.
**Methods and materials.** A diagnostic survey was conducted involving 104 parents of children participating in a music ensemble using an original questionnaire. The analysis comprised descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, Pearson's

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correlation analysis, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Differences associated with the duration of children's participation were also examined.

**Results and conclusion.** All constructs received high ratings. Organizational communication, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and reputation were positively related. Longer participation was associated with stronger interpersonal relationships, higher trust, and a greater sense of community. These findings support RCE as a framework for analysing educational environments and community-based organizations sustained by enduring interpersonal ties. They show how the relational paradigm of public relations can explain the contribution of everyday communication to trust, community formation, and reputation outside formal communication structures. The study thereby extends public relations theory to settings where educational, relational, and organizational processes converge.

***Keywords*:** relational communication environment, children's music ensemble, public relations, organizational communication, trust, sense of community, organizational reputation, social capital

**Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Dziecięce zespoły muzyczne łączą edukację artystyczną z relacjami między dziećmi, rodzicami i prowadzącymi. W badaniu analizowano taki zespół jako relacyjne środowisko komunikacyjne (RŚK). Określono związki między postrzeganą jakością komunikacji organizacyjnej, zaufaniem, przekazem wartości, relacjami interpersonalnymi, poczuciem wspólnoty i reputacją organizacji. Ramy teoretyczne integrują relacyjny paradygmat public relations z pedagogiką, teorią kapitału społecznego, teorią działania komunikacyjnego i badaniami nad edukacją muzyczną. Zaproponowano także RŚK jako kategorię analityczną organizacji wspólnotowych, w których codzienna komunikacja podtrzymuje relacje.

**Metody i materiały.** Badanie przeprowadzono metodą sondażu diagnostycznego wśród 104 rodziców dzieci uczestniczących w działalności zespołu muzycznego, wykorzystując autorski kwestionariusz ankiety. Analiza objęła statystykę opisową, współczynnik rzetelności α Cronbacha, analizę korelacji Pearsona oraz jednoczynnikową analizę wariancji (ANOVA). Zbadano również różnice związane z długością uczestnictwa dzieci w zespole.

**Wyniki i wnioski.** Wszystkie analizowane konstrukty uzyskały wysokie oceny. Komunikacja organizacyjna, zaufanie, przekaz wartości, poczucie wspólnoty i reputacja były ze sobą dodatnio powiązane. Dłuższe uczestnictwo wiązało się z silniejszymi relacjami interpersonalnymi, wyższym poziomem zaufania i większym poczuciem wspólnoty. Wyniki potwierdzają użyteczność koncepcji RŚK w analizie środowisk wychowawczych i organizacji wspólnotowych opartych na trwałych więziach interpersonalnych. Pokazują, że relacyjny paradygmat public relations pozwala wyjaśniać znaczenie codziennej komunikacji dla budowania zaufania, wspólnoty i reputacji także poza formalnymi strukturami komunikacyjnymi.

Badanie rozszerza tym samym zastosowanie teorii public relations na środowiska, w których procesy wychowawcze, relacyjne i organizacyjne wzajemnie się przenikają.

***Słowa kluczowe*:** relacyjne środowisko komunikacyjne, dziecięcy zespół muzyczny, public relations, komunikacja organizacyjna, zaufanie, poczucie wspólnoty, reputacja organizacji, kapitał społeczny

## Introduction

Contemporary research in public relations has increasingly moved beyond the traditional transmission model of communication, which primarily focuses on the dissemination of information and the management of organizational image, toward a relational approach that emphasizes the quality of relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. Within this perspective, public relations is understood not as a set of promotional or marketing activities but as a long-term process of building trust, mutual understanding, engagement, and enduring relationships (Grunig, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003). Communication is therefore viewed not merely as an organizational tool but as the fundamental mechanism through which social relationships are created, trust is developed, and organizational legitimacy is established.

The relational paradigm of public relations has been widely applied to studies of businesses, public administration, non-governmental organizations, and cultural institutions. Considerably less attention, however, has been devoted to small community-based organizations whose activities are primarily grounded in direct interpersonal relationships and everyday communication practices. Despite the growing importance of relational approaches in public relations research, the functioning of such organizations remains relatively underexplored from an empirical perspective, revealing a significant research gap. In these organizations, communication is not implemented through professional media strategies or marketing campaigns but emerges naturally through shared experiences, cooperation, and long-term interpersonal interactions among organizational members.

Children's music ensembles constitute a particularly interesting example of such environments. They operate simultaneously within the spheres of education, culture, and local community life, creating settings in which children, parents, instructors, and other participants engage in regular and often long-term relationships. Rehearsals, concerts, educational activities, joint performances, and artistic events become spaces for everyday interaction, where communication contributes to the development of trust, a sense of community, identification with the ensemble, and its organizational reputation. From the perspective of public relations theory, children's music ensembles may

therefore be understood as relational organizations, in which communication is not merely an organizational function but the primary mechanism through which relationships are established and maintained.

Previous research in music education has primarily focused on the influence of collective music-making on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Uchyła-Zroski, 2022). More recently, scholars have also emphasized the role of music as a means of supporting individuals with diverse developmental needs and as an environment fostering the development of social and communicative competences (Piotrowski, 2025). Likewise, social capital theory highlights that regular social interaction, reciprocity, and trust constitute the foundations of sustainable communities (Putnam, 2000). Habermas's theory of communicative action further argues that communication extends beyond the transmission of information, actively shaping social reality through processes of mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984). Although these theoretical perspectives describe similar social mechanisms, they have rarely been integrated within public relations research on community-based organizations.

This article seeks to address this research gap by examining a children's music ensemble as a RCE in which relational communication serves as the principal mechanism for building trust, social relationships, shared values, and organizational reputation. The study is based on the assumption that communication processes occurring in the everyday functioning of community-based organizations can be analysed using concepts developed within public relations theory, even when such organizations do not engage in professional communication activities in the traditional sense.

The originality of the proposed approach lies in interpreting a children's music ensemble as a RCE, where everyday interactions among participants constitute the primary mechanism for developing relationships, trust, and organizational reputation. The study introduces RCE as a new analytical concept designed to describe community-based organizations whose functioning depends on enduring interpersonal relationships and everyday communication. Within this framework, a children's music ensemble represents a distinctive type of community organization in which communication extends beyond its informational function to actively shape relationships, trust, collective identity, and organizational reputation. Consequently, the article proposes extending the scope of public relations theory to organizations whose functioning is primarily based on interpersonal communication and long-term social relationships.

The primary objective of the study is to examine how parents of children participating in a music ensemble perceive communication processes within the organization and to identify the relationships between organizational communication quality, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and organizational reputation. A secondary objective is to assess whether a children's music ensemble can serve as a useful

analytical model for understanding relational communication in community-based organizations operating within local communities.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating public relations theory, communication theory, social capital theory, and music education research into a single interpretative framework. The proposed approach broadens the scope of public relations research beyond formal organizations and institutions by demonstrating that the fundamental mechanisms of relational communication also emerge in small community-based organizations, where everyday interpersonal interactions constitute the principal means of developing durable social relationships. The proposed model may serve as a foundation for future research on relational communication in community-based organizations and contribute to expanding the application of public relations theory beyond the formal organizational contexts traditionally examined in the literature.

## Theoretical Framework

Examining a children's music ensemble as a RCE requires the integration of several complementary theoretical perspectives. The primary framework adopted in this study is the relational paradigm of public relations, according to which relationships between an organization and its stakeholders constitute the central object of analysis. This perspective is complemented by theories of organizational trust and reputation, social capital theory, and the theory of communicative action, all of which provide valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying the formation of social relationships and community bonds. In addition, incorporating research on music education makes it possible to interpret a children's music ensemble not only as an educational setting but also as an environment of relational communication. The theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter provide the foundation for the research model and the formulation of the research questions.

### *Public Relations as Relationship Management*

Over the past several decades, public relations theory has undergone a substantial transformation, evolving from an approach primarily concerned with information dissemination and organizational image management toward a relational model in which the development and maintenance of long-term relationships between organizations and their stakeholders constitute the central objective. This shift reflects a broader understanding of public relations as a strategic process of relationship management based on mutual trust, dialogue, and stakeholder engagement rather than as a collection of promotional or marketing activities (Ledingham, 2003).

One of the most influential developments within contemporary public relations scholarship is relationship management theory, developed primarily by John

A. Ledingham. According to this perspective, the principal function of public relations is not merely to facilitate communication between an organization and its environment but to initiate, develop, and sustain relationships with stakeholders. Consequently, the effectiveness of communication should be assessed not by the volume of information disseminated or the success of media campaigns but by the quality, durability, and mutual benefits of organizational relationships (Ledingham, 2003).

A complementary framework was proposed by Linda Childers Hon and James E. Grunig (1999), who developed a widely recognized model for measuring the quality of organization–public relationships. They identified four fundamental dimensions of relationship quality: trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality. These dimensions have subsequently become some of the most frequently employed constructs in empirical research on public relations and relationship management. Among them, trust is considered particularly important because it constitutes the foundation of enduring relationships and long-term cooperation between organizations and their stakeholders.

The literature further emphasizes that organizational relationships are not established solely through formal communication activities. James E. Grunig argues that effective communication is grounded in dialogue, reciprocity, and the development of mutual understanding rather than in one-way information transmission (Grunig, 2000). From this perspective, organizational communication performs an integrative function by creating and strengthening social relationships, fostering trust, and enabling stakeholders to pursue shared objectives.

The relational perspective also extends the scope of public relations research beyond corporations and institutions equipped with professional communication departments. Increasingly, scholars recognize that the mechanisms described by relationship management theory are equally relevant to organizations operating within local communities, where communication occurs primarily through everyday interactions and direct interpersonal contact. In such settings, public relations is expressed not through formal communication strategies but through everyday social practices that cultivate trust, cooperation, and enduring interpersonal relationships.

Within this theoretical framework, public relations provides a useful lens for examining community-based organizations whose functioning depends on regular interaction among participants and their shared commitment to common goals. Children's music ensembles represent a particularly compelling example of such organizations, as the everyday cooperation among children, parents, and instructors creates a natural environment of relational communication. Consequently, they may be understood as RCEs in which communication is not a separate organizational function but the primary mechanism through which relationships, trust, and organizational reputation are created and sustained.

### *Trust, Social Capital and Organizational Reputation*

Trust is one of the fundamental concepts used to explain organizational functioning and the social relationships that develop among organizational members. According to Niklas Luhmann (1979), trust serves as a mechanism for reducing social complexity, enabling individuals to act under conditions of uncertainty and limited knowledge about the behaviour of others. In organizations based on direct interpersonal interaction, trust becomes particularly important because it influences both the willingness to cooperate and the quality of interpersonal relationships.

From the perspective of public relations, trust is regarded as one of the principal indicators of relationship quality between an organization and its stakeholders. Hon and Grunig (1999) argue that durable organizational relationships emerge when stakeholders perceive an organization as trustworthy, competent, and responsible. Trust should therefore be understood not merely as the outcome of effective communication but as the result of long-term consistency between an organization's declared values and its actual practices.

An important complement to this perspective is Robert D. Putnam's theory of social capital (2000), which emphasizes that trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks of social relationships constitute the foundations of cooperation and community integration. Social capital is not created through isolated communication activities; rather, it develops gradually through regular interaction, shared experiences, and long-term participation in community life. Community-based organizations therefore contribute not only to achieving their institutional objectives but also to strengthening social ties, civic engagement, and collective identity.

A natural consequence of high levels of trust and well-developed social capital is the formation of organizational reputation. Charles J. Fombrun (1996) defines reputation as a relatively stable overall evaluation of an organization based on stakeholders' experiences and perceptions. Organizational reputation can therefore be understood as the cumulative outcome of long-term communication processes between an organization and its stakeholders. Unlike organizational image, which may change rapidly in response to promotional activities, reputation develops gradually through consistent organizational behaviour and alignment between communicated values and everyday practice. Within community-based organizations, reputation is formed primarily through the direct experiences of participants and their families and is subsequently reinforced through recommendations circulated within local communities.

Adopting a relational public relations perspective makes it possible to view trust, social capital, and organizational reputation as interconnected dimensions of a single communication process. In organizations whose functioning is grounded in everyday interpersonal interaction, communication effectiveness is reflected not in the quantity of information disseminated but in the quality of relationships established, the degree

of participants' identification with the community, and their willingness to recommend the organization to others. These interrelationships constitute one of the principal theoretical foundations of the research model proposed in this study.

### *Children's Music Ensembles as Environments of Relational Communication*

Children's music ensembles represent a distinctive type of community-based organization that integrates educational, developmental, artistic, and social functions. Their activities extend far beyond the transmission of musical knowledge and the development of artistic skills, relying instead on sustained cooperation among children, parents, and instructors. Regular rehearsals, concerts, educational trips, and artistic events create opportunities for everyday interaction in which musical competences, social relationships, and a sense of belonging develop simultaneously.

Research in music education consistently demonstrates that collective music-making promotes not only artistic development but also the formation of social responsibility, cooperation, interpersonal communication, and prosocial attitudes (Hallam, 2010; Uchyła-Zroski, 2022; Welch *et al*., 2014). Music therefore functions as a medium that integrates participants while creating opportunities for relationships based on mutual trust and cooperation. Collective music-making may consequently be interpreted not only as an educational process but also as a communicative process through which social relationships and interpersonal trust are established and strengthened within a community. From this perspective, the activities of a children's music ensemble extend beyond traditional artistic education by creating an environment conducive to the development of social capital.

Parents likewise play a crucial role in the functioning of such organizations. Rather than remaining passive observers, they actively participate in community life by co-organizing events, providing organizational and logistical support, attending performances, and maintaining regular communication with instructors. As a result, communication occurs simultaneously on multiple levels: between instructors and children, instructors and parents, parents themselves, and among the children participating in the ensemble. These interactions create a dense network of interpersonal relationships that forms the foundation for trust, cooperation, and identification with the community.

From the perspective of the relational paradigm of public relations, a children's music ensemble may be understood as a RCE in which communication is not a separate organizational activity but an integral element of everyday community life. This interpretation is consistent with the understanding of public relations as a process of building long-term relationships with stakeholders based on dialogue, trust, and organizational responsibility (Piotrowski, 2021). Every rehearsal, concert, and shared initiative becomes an opportunity to strengthen stakeholder relationships

and enhance organizational reputation through lived experience rather than through information dissemination alone.

This perspective makes it possible to interpret children's music ensembles not merely as environments of music education but also as relational organizations in which the fundamental mechanisms described by public relations theory emerge naturally through everyday communication practices. Consequently, they provide a valuable empirical setting for examining the relationships among organizational communication, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and organizational reputation.

## Research Gap and Research Model

A review of the literature indicates that contemporary public relations research has developed comprehensive theoretical frameworks explaining the role of relationships, trust, and organizational reputation in organizational functioning (Grunig, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003). At the same time, research in music education has focused primarily on the impact of collective music-making on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, as well as on the role of shared musical experiences in fostering cultural competences, interpersonal relationships, and creative engagement (Hallam, 2010; Ławrowska & Nowak, 2023; Welch *et al*., 2014). However, relatively little attention has been devoted to integrating these two perspectives by examining children's music ensembles as organizations in which communication constitutes the primary mechanism for building relationships among stakeholders.

The principal research gap therefore lies in the lack of empirical studies investigating children's music ensembles as RCEs operating according to the fundamental mechanisms described by public relations theory. To date, such organizations have been analysed primarily from the perspectives of music education, developmental psychology, and pedagogy, whereas considerably less attention has been paid to their role as environments of relational communication in which everyday interactions contribute to the development of trust, shared values, and organizational reputation.

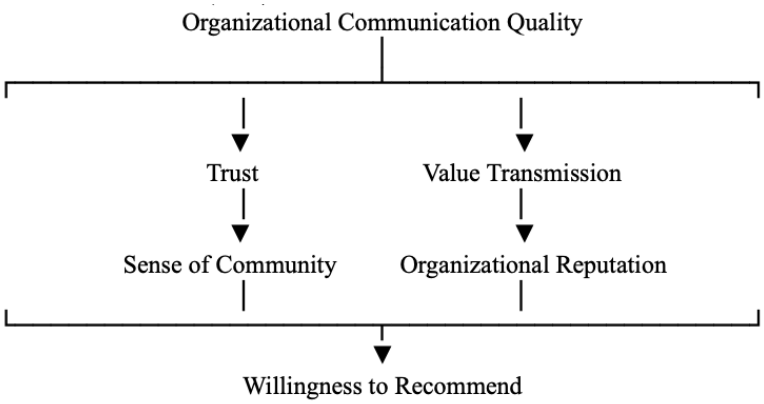
The research model adopted in this study assumes that the quality of organizational communication influences stakeholders' trust, that trust facilitates the development of a sense of community, and that shared values and collective experiences contribute to organizational reputation as well as participants' willingness to recommend the ensemble to others. Consequently, the children's music ensemble is conceptualized as a RCE that provides an empirical setting for examining the relationships among organizational communication, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and organizational reputation.

The theoretical assumptions presented above provide the basis for the formulation of the research questions and the empirical model discussed in the following section of the article.

To systematize the theoretical assumptions and illustrate the relationships among the analysed constructs, an original research model was developed (Figure 1). The model presents the conceptual framework of the RCE and illustrates the principal relationships among the key constructs examined in this study.

**Figure 1**

*Research model illustrating the relationships among the constructs within the RCE*




### *Research Methodology*

The theoretical assumptions presented in the previous section, together with the proposed RCE model, required empirical verification. Accordingly, a quantitative study was conducted to examine the relationships among organizational communication quality, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and the organizational reputation of a children's music ensemble from the perspective of its principal stakeholders – parents of children participating in the ensemble's activities.

This chapter presents the research objectives and research questions, describes the study sample and the research instrument, outlines the data collection procedure, and explains the statistical methods employed to analyse the data and evaluate the proposed research model.

### *Research Objective and Research Questions*

The primary objective of the study was to empirically examine the relationships among organizational communication quality, trust, value transmission, sense of com-

munity, and the organizational reputation of a children's music ensemble conceptualized as a RCE. The study was based on the assumption that community-based organizations operating through regular interpersonal interactions can be analysed from the perspective of the relational paradigm of public relations and that the communication processes occurring in their everyday functioning are amenable to empirical observation and measurement.

The research focused on how parents of children participating in the ensemble perceived organizational communication and its role in fostering relationships among members of the community. Particular attention was devoted to the relationships among organizational communication, trust, value transmission, sense of community, and organizational reputation, as well as to the influence of the child's duration of participation in the ensemble on parents' evaluations of these dimensions.

Based on these assumptions, the following research questions were formulated:

- RQ1. Is organizational communication quality significantly associated with parents' trust in the children's music ensemble?
- RQ2. Does the value transmission promoted by the ensemble influence its perceived organizational reputation?
- RQ3. Does a stronger sense of community increase parents' willingness to recommend the ensemble to others?
- RQ4. Does the child's length of participation in the ensemble significantly differentiate parents' evaluations of organizational communication, trust, sense of community, and organizational reputation?

The answers to these research questions provided the basis for selecting the statistical procedures and interpreting the empirical findings presented in the following sections.

### *Characteristics of the Research Sample*

The study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method and an original questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The respondents were parents of children participating in the activities of a children's music ensemble operating as a RCE. Purposive sampling was employed because the study involved individuals who were directly engaged in the life of the organization and possessed knowledge of its everyday functioning.

A total of 104 correctly completed questionnaires were collected and included in the subsequent statistical analysis. Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent. The questionnaires were completed independently, without the involvement of the ensemble's leaders, to reduce the potential influence of factors that might affect the respondents' answers.

Given the purpose of the study, the background section of the questionnaire was limited to information concerning the length of the child's participation in the ensemble's

activities, as this was considered a variable relevant to the relationships under investigation. No data were collected on the respondents' age, gender, educational attainment, or place of residence, since these variables were not necessary for achieving the adopted research objectives. A detailed description of the research sample is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the research sample (N = 104)*

| Variable | Category | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of respondents | Total | 104 | 100 |
| Length of the child's participation in the ensemble | Less than 6 months | 12 | 11.5 |
| | 6–12 months | 19 | 18.3 |
| | 1–2 years | 35 | 33.7 |
| | More than 2 years | 38 | 36.5 |

### *Research Instrument*

The study employed an original questionnaire developed specifically for the purposes of the present research project. The design of the instrument was based on the assumptions of the relational paradigm of public relations and the model of the RCE presented in the theoretical section of the article. The individual items addressed the key research constructs: the quality of organizational communication, level of trust, communication of values, interpersonal relationships, sense of community, the impact of the ensemble's activities on the child's development, and organizational reputation.

Closed-ended items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated (*strongly disagree*) and 5 indicated (*strongly agree*). The use of a uniform response scale enabled comparisons between the individual constructs and facilitated correlational and comparative analyses. The structure of the research instrument is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Structure of the research questionnaire*

| Research area | Scope of measurement | Response format |
|---|---|---|
| Organizational communication | Assessment of the quality of communication between the ensemble and parents | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |
| Trust | Trust in the ensemble leaders and the child's sense of safety | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |
| Communication of values | Assessment of the educational and social values communicated by the ensemble | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |
| Interpersonal relationships | Quality of relationship among ensemble participants | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |

| Research area | Scope of measurement | Response format |
|---|---|---|
| Sense of community | Identification with the ensemble and sense of belonging to the community | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |
| Child development | Impact of the ensemble's activities on the child's social and emotional development | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |
| Organizational reputation | Assessment of the ensemble's credibility and public perception | Five-point Likert scale (1–5) |

### *Statistical Analysis Methods*

The statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and methods for examining relationships among the constructs under investigation. In the first stage, basic descriptive statistics were calculated, including arithmetic means ($M$) and standard deviations ($SD$), which made it possible to determine the level of respondents' assessments of the individual areas of the ensemble's functioning.

The internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$), a coefficient commonly employed to evaluate the reliability of research instruments comprising multiple-item scales. Relationships among the analysed constructs were examined using Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient ($r$). This method was selected because of the quantitative nature of the variables and its suitability for determining the strength and direction of the relationships among them.

To determine whether the duration of the child's participation in the ensemble's activities differentiated respondents' assessments, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. This analysis enabled the comparison of mean scores obtained from respondents representing different groups based on the duration of their child's participation in the ensemble.

A statistical significance level of $p < .05$ was adopted for all analyses. The results are presented in statistical tables containing descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and the results of the analysis of variance.

## Results

The analysis was conducted to answer the research questions by assessing the levels of the individual constructs and determining the relationships among them. First, descriptive statistics and reliability estimates for the individual constructs are presented. This is followed by the results of the correlation analyses and an examination of whether the duration of the child's participation in the ensemble's activities differentiated respondents' assessments.

### *Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliability*

The first stage of the analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics for all the constructs under investigation. Arithmetic means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) were calculated to determine the level of respondents' assessments and the degree of variability in the results. Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$) was also calculated to assess the internal consistency of the individual scales. The findings provide the basis for the subsequent analyses of relationships among the constructs. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics and reliability of the analysed constructs*

| **Research construct** | ***m*** | ***SD*** | **Cronbach's *α*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational communication | 4.62 | 0.41 | 0.88 |
| Trust | 4.91 | 0.28 | 0.91 |
| Communication of values | 4.88 | 0.30 | 0.89 |
| Interpersonal relationships | 4.85 | 0.33 | 0.87 |
| Sense of community | 4.50 | 0.47 | 0.85 |
| Child development | 4.98 | 0.14 | 0.93 |
| Organisational reputation | 4.87 | 0.31 | 0.90 |

The results indicate very high ratings across all the constructs analysed. The highest mean score was obtained for the *Child development* construct ($M = 4.98$), whereas the lowest was recorded for *Sense of community* ($M = 4.50$). All scales demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .85–.93$), confirming their good reliability. Cronbach's $\alpha$ values exceeding .80 also indicate the high reliability of the research instrument and confirm the internal consistency of the measurement scales employed.

### *Analysis of Relationships Among the Constructs*

After determining the levels of the individual constructs, the relationships among them were analysed using Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient (*r*). The purpose of the analysis was to establish whether the quality of organizational communication was associated with the level of trust, communication of values, sense of community, and organizational reputation, as well as to determine the strength and direction of these relationships.

Pearson' correlation coefficient makes it possible to assess the degree of covariation between the variables under investigation. Positive values indicate that an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in the other, whereas negative values indicate an inverse relationship. In accordance with the adopted interpretation criteria, correlation coefficients below .30 were regarded as indicating weak relationships, values

ranging from .30 to .49 as moderate relationships, and values equal to or greater than .50 as strong relationships. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Correlations among the analysed constructs (Pearson' correlation coefficient, r)*

| Construct | Organizational communication | Trust | Communication of values | Interpersonal relationships | Sense of community | Child development | Organizational reputation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational communication | — | | | | | | |
| Trust | 0.74*** | — | | | | | |
| Communication of values | 0.69*** | 0.76*** | — | | | | |
| Interpersonal relationships | 0.71*** | 0.73*** | 0.70*** | — | | | |
| Sense of community | 0.66*** | 0,72*** | 0.68*** | 0.75*** | — | | |
| Child development | 0.59*** | 0.64*** | 0.71*** | 0.63*** | 0.61*** | — | |
| Organizational reputation | 0.77*** | 0.82*** | 0.79*** | 0.74*** | 0.76*** | 0.68*** | — |

Note. **$p < .001$.

The correlation analysis showed positive and statistically significant relationships among all the constructs examined ($p < .001$). This means that higher ratings of one of the analysed areas were associated with higher ratings of the remaining areas, confirming the coherence of the proposed RCE model.

A particularly strong relationship was found between trust and organizational reputation ($r = .82$), indicating that parents who perceived the ensemble leaders as credible and trustworthy also evaluated the ensemble's reputation more positively. A very strong relationship was also observed between the communication of values and organizational reputation ($r = .79$), suggesting that the consistent implementation of educational and social values constitutes one of the most important factors contributing to a positive perception of the organization.

A significant relationship was also found between organizational communication and trust ($r = .74$), confirming that effective communication contributes to the development of lasting relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. A relationship of similar strength was identified between interpersonal relationships

and the sense of community ($r$ = .75), indicating that the quality of everyday interactions is an important factor in integrating the ensemble's participants.

The lowest correlation coefficient, although still strong and statistically significant, was found between organizational communication and child development ($r$ = .59). This result indicates that child development is associated with the quality of organizational communication; however, its determinants are more complex and also include other factors, such as the participants' individual predispositions, their family environment, and the course of the educational process.

The findings confirm that organizational communication, trust, the communication of values, interpersonal relationships, sense of community, and organizational reputation form an interconnected system of relationships. This provides empirical support for the proposed RCE model and indicates that the mechanisms described within the relational paradigm of public relations are also applicable to community-based organizations, such as children's music ensembles.

### *Results of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Analysed Constructs According to the Length of the Child's Participation in the Ensemble's Activities*

The final stage of the quantitative analysis examined whether the length of the child's participation in the ensemble's activities differentiated parents' perceptions of the analysed constructs. For this purpose, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, enabling the comparison of mean scores among groups of respondents whose children differed in the duration of their participation in the ensemble's activities.

**Table 5**

*Results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the analysed constructs according to the duration of the child's participation in the ensemble's activities*

| Construct | *f* | *p* | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational communication | 2.81 | 0.043 | Significant difference |
| Trust | 5.21 | 0.002 | Significant difference |
| Communication of values | 2.47 | 0.066 | No significant differences |
| Interpersonal relationships | 2.94 | 0.037 | Significant difference |
| Sense of community | 3.94 | 0.011 | Significant difference |
| Child development | 1.38 | 0.253 | No significant differences |
| Organizational reputation | 2.36 | 0.075 | No significant differences |

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the duration of the child's participation in the ensemble's activities differentiated respondents' assessments of selected aspects of the relational communication environment. Statistically significant differences were

found in relation to the quality of organizational communication ($f = 2.81$, $p = .043$), trust ($f = 5.21$, $p = .002$), interpersonal relationships ($f = 2.94$, $p = .037$), and sense of community ($f = 3.94$, $p = .011$).

These findings indicate that as the duration of the child's participation in the ensemble increased, parents assessed the quality of communication, the level of mutual trust, interpersonal relationships, and identification with the community more positively.

No statistically significant differences were found with regard to the communication of values ($f = 2.47$, $p = .066$), child development ($f = 1.38$, $p = .253$), or organizational reputation ($f = 2.36$, $p = .075$). This means that regardless of the duration of the child's participation, respondents rated the values communicated by the ensemble, its impact on the child's development, and the organization's reputation very highly.

The findings suggest that the duration of participation primarily contributes to the strengthening of interpersonal relationships and the development of trust, whereas positive assessments of educational values, the impact of the ensemble's activities on child development, and organizational reputation emerge at a relatively early stage of participation and remain stable in subsequent years. This provides further confirmation that the relational communication environment develops primarily through the long-term experience of joint activity, while maintaining a high degree of axiological coherence and a positive perception of the organization regardless of the length of its members' participation.

The findings presented above provide the basis for further interpretation in the light of the relational paradigm of public relations and the relational communication environment model proposed in this study.

## Discussion

The findings confirm the validity of applying the relational paradigm of public relations to the analysis of community-based organizations operating outside the business sector and public administration. The high ratings of all the constructs examined and the strong relationships among the quality of organizational communication, level of trust, communication of values, interpersonal relationships, sense of community, and organizational reputation indicate that the mechanisms described in classical public relations theories are also reflected in environments based on everyday social interactions.

The findings are consistent with the relational approach to public relations developed by Ledingham (2003) and the organization–stakeholder relationship model proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999). These authors argue that the durability of organizational relationships is based primarily on mutual trust, commitment, and dialogue. The present study demonstrates that similar mechanisms also occur in children's music ensembles,

even though such organizations do not conduct professional communication activities characteristic of formal organizations. This suggests that organizational relationships may develop spontaneously through systematic cooperation among community members and regular interpersonal communication.

Particularly noteworthy are the strong relationships between trust and organizational reputation and between the communication of values and reputation. These findings indicate that the reputation of a community-based organization is built primarily through participants' everyday experiences, consistency between declared values and organizational practice, and the quality of mutual relationships. In this respect, the results are consistent with Fombrun's (1996) conceptualization of reputation as the outcome of long-term experience rather than merely the result of promotional activities.

Another important finding is the confirmation of the significance of the duration of participation in community life. As the duration of participation increased, respondents' assessments of communication quality, trust, interpersonal relationships, and sense of community also increased. At the same time, the duration of participation did not differentiate assessments of the communication of values, the impact of the ensemble's activities on child development, or organizational reputation. It may therefore be assumed that these areas are perceived positively from the beginning of participation, whereas the development of relationships and identification with the community requires more time and systematic involvement. The empirical findings confirm the usefulness of the RCE model proposed in this article as a tool for interpreting communication processes occurring in community-based organizations.

A particular contribution of the study is the introduction of the concept of the RCE as a category describing community-based organizations whose functioning is grounded in enduring interpersonal relationships and communication. The findings indicate that this model makes it possible to integrate the perspectives of public relations, communication theory, social capital, and music education within a coherent interpretative framework. Consequently, the proposed concept may be applied not only in research on children's music ensembles, but also in studies of choirs, orchestras, scouting organizations, sports clubs, and other organizations based on long-term social relationships.

## Conclusion and Interpretations

The study confirmed that a children's music ensemble can be analysed as a RCE, in which communication constitutes the primary mechanism for building trust, interpersonal relationships, shared values, and organizational reputation. The findings indicate strong and statistically significant relationships among the constructs

examined, thereby supporting the assumptions of the relational paradigm of public relations and demonstrating its applicability to community-based organizations.

An important outcome of the study is the finding that organizational reputation is not merely the result of informational or promotional activities but is shaped primarily by community members' direct experiences, the quality of communication, and the consistency between declared values and the organization's actual practices. The results also indicate that a longer duration of participation is associated with higher levels of trust, better interpersonal relationships, and a stronger sense of community, confirming the importance of long-term involvement in the development of enduring social bonds.

The principal scholarly contribution of this article is the introduction of a new analytical category — the relational communication environment — which describes organizations whose functioning is based primarily on direct interpersonal relationships and everyday communication. The proposed model therefore extends the scope of public relations theory beyond businesses and formal institutions to include community-based organizations operating in local environments.

The findings also open up new avenues for research. One promising direction would be to compare relational communication environments operating in different cultural contexts and to examine the influence of digital communication on the development of relationships, trust, and reputation in contemporary communities.

The proposed concept may serve as a point of departure for the further development of research on relational communication and contribute to broadening the application of public relations theory to the analysis of organizations based on community, cooperation, and enduring social relationships.

The relational communication environment is not an alternative to public relations theory; rather, it extends its application to community-based organizations in which everyday interpersonal communication constitutes the primary means of relationship building.

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