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# Associations among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationships, and support for organisations: An exploratory study of the non-profit sector

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## Abstract

*In this study, the relationships among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationships, and support for the organisation were examined. In particular, the focus is on non-profit organisations in South Korea, which has seldom been subject to public relations management research. Support for organisations was conceptualised and measured as intention to donate and volunteer, as non-profit organisations heavily rely on these two types of public support. A survey of 275 members from five different non-profit organisations in South Korea was conducted from May to June 2008. Findings of the study showed that relationship maintenance strategies are critical antecedents of organisation-public relationships. Furthermore, the quality of organisation-public relationships significantly affected the public's intention to support non-profit organisations. Theoretical and practical implications of the study results are discussed.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

Non-profit organisations are institutions whose goals are not profit generation, but to support public interest and to enhance the welfare of communities. Non-profit organisation scholars (Kim, 2004; Salamon, 1998) emphasise the importance of non-profit

organisations and argue that in the 21st century, human welfare and happiness depend on non-profit organisations such as activist groups, charitable organisations, and community organisations. Throughout the world, the number of non-profit organisations is increasing constantly; Korea is no exception to this trend. According to *Korean NGO bibliography* (2006), the number of non-profit organisations in Korea is increasing every year, and about 23,000 non-profit organisations are currently operating (*Korean NGO bibliography*, 2006).

As more non-profit organisations compete for limited resources, public relations is becoming an indispensable function (Boyer, 1997). Critical resources for non-profit organisations come not only from government funding but also from publics' donations and volunteering. In order for non-profit organisations to generate support, they need to develop favourable relationships with publics. In this line of thinking, public relations as a relationship management function can contribute to the effectiveness of non-profit organisation. Public relations has been redefined as a relationship management function between organisations and their publics, since Ferguson (1984) argued that relationships should be a focal concept of public relations study (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997).

However, unlike the US or other western countries, there are few empirical public relations studies on non-profit organisation public relations in South Korea. For instance, Kim and Kim (2004) conducted a study on

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fundraising messages from a rhetorical perspective in South Korea. However, many Korean researchers focus only on donation, and volunteering has not been considered a key support variable. In addition, little Korean research imported relationship management theory in examining non-profit organisations. In this study, by adopting the relationship management perspective, we attempt to examine whether the theory can help explain or predict support for Korean non-profit organisations. More specifically, we explore the relations among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationship, and support for organisation.

### **Literature review**

#### *Relationship management theory*

Relationship management theory, the conceptual framework of this study, has been actively discussed since Ferguson (1984) suggested that relationships should be the unit of study of public relations. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) defined public relations in terms of its management function. According to them, public relations builds and maintains favourable relationships between an organisation and its publics. The success and failure of an organisation depends on these relationships.

Organisation-public relationships have been defined differently by various scholars since the 1980s. According to Ledingham and Bruning (1998), the organisation-public relationship is defined as “the state which exists between an organisation and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 62). Broom, et al. (1997) defined relationships as “properties of exchange, transactions, communications, and other interconnected activities” (p. 94) leading to mutual benefit. In this study, following the widely accepted Broom et al. (1997) definition, organisation-public relationships are conceptualised as the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and

linkage between an organisation and its strategic publics.

In their research, Broom, et al. (1997) proposed a model of organisation-public relationships that included antecedents to a relationship, relationship states, and relationship consequences. Grunig and Huang (2000) reconceptualised Broom et al.’s (1997) model and suggested that the study of organisation-public relationships should include each of the three components of the model: relationship antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies, and outcomes of the strategies. Relationship antecedents may cause specific relationships between an organisation and its publics to develop. Relationship maintenance strategies are communication efforts used by public relations practitioners to establish and maintain favourable relationships between organisations and their publics.

Specifically, there are six relationship maintenance strategies: access, positivity, openness, assurance, networking, and sharing tasks (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Hon and Grunig (1999) referred to these as symmetrical strategies, which can generate better relationship outcomes. Access is an organisation’s willingness to provide access to publics and answer publics’ queries and questions rather than negative reactions. Positivity is defined as an organisation’s effort to make its relationship with publics more enjoyable. Openness means that both an organisation and publics are open and honest in their thoughts and feelings. Assurance is defined as the attempts by an organisation to assure its publics that they and their concerns are legitimate. Sharing of tasks refers to an organisation’s and publics’ sharing of effort in solving their problems or dealing with issues. Networking is the degree of an organisation’s effort to build networks or coalitions with similar groups for their programmes and activities. However, research on these specific strategies is not too prevalent. Ki and Hon’s (2007) study was one of the first attempts to put maintenance strategies measurement under empirical testing.

On the other hand, many scholars have tried to measure relationship outcomes as public relations effectiveness or value and suggested various dimensions of organisation-public relationships. For instance, Hon and Grunig (1999) integrated a variety of dimensions of organisation-public relationships through a literature review and proposed control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, exchange relationship, communal relationship, and commitment. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) suggested trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment as dimensions of organisation-public relationship by examining research from public relations, interpersonal communication, marketing, and social psychology and by conducting a survey. However, Kim (2001) suggested that instruments suggested by various scholars should be put to more rigorous reliability and validity testing. He conducted exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis and suggested trust, commitment, community involvement, and reputation as four final key dimensions of organisation-public relationships. More recently, Kim and Lee (2008) developed an organisation-public relationship scale that opted to reflect the Korean cultural context. They included attachment as a new dimension. Attachment refers to the emotional connection or the bond between an organisation and its publics, which is similar to loyalty. In this study, different instruments of Kim (2001), Kim and Lee (2008), and Hon and Grunig (1999) were adopted and tailored to the Korean non-profit organisation setting.

#### *Non-profit organisations and public relations*

According to Salamon and Anheier's (1992) International Classification of Non-profit Organisations (ICNPO), non-profit organisations are formally constituted, have nongovernmental structure, are self-governing, and do not have profit generation as their primary goal. This study adopted Salamon and Anheier's (1992) definition of

non-profit organisations and referred to their categorisation scheme in identifying relevant non-profits. The ICNPO categorised types of non-profit organisations as follows: culture and recreation (group 1), education and research (group 2), health (group 3), social services (group 4), environment (group 5), development and housing (group 6), law, advocacy and politics (group 7), philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion (group 8), international activities (group 9), religion (group 10), business and professional associations and unions (group 11), and other (group 12).

Rapid growth of non-profit organisations prompted fierce competition for limited resources. In particular, financial and voluntary support by individual donors or volunteers is critical resources for non-profit organisations (Van Slyke & Johnson, 2006). Frumkin and Kim's (2001) research also demonstrated that individual support is essential for non-profit organisation sustainability. Public relations may be a vital tool for non-profit organisations to gain individual support. Specifically, public relations could help non-profit organisations to attain a good reputation, achieve trust, lead participation, and manage crises effectively (Kinzey, 1999).

However, much research on non-profit organisations focused on donation. Scholars such as Kelly (1995) defined public relations of non-profit organisations as donor relations and emphasised the importance of developing good relationships with potential givers in donor relations. Boyer (1997) also argued that public relations is the most effective tool in fundraising.

Van Slyke and Johnson (2006) suggested that not only donation but also volunteering and the interaction between donation and volunteering should be examined in order to understand non-profit organisation support. However, volunteering has not been researched too extensively. Thus, in this study, both donation and volunteering are explored.

In Korean public relations research, non-profit organisations are relatively overlooked compared with for-profit organisations. Most

Korean research on any given non-profit organisation rarely examined communication factors (Han & Moon, 2003; Jeong, 2002; Park & Jeong, 2002). In the field of communication, Kim and Kim (2004; 2005) analysed fundraising based on the rhetorical perspective. However, study on non-profit organisations from a public relations perspective is still rare in South Korea. Thus, this study attempts to apply relationship management theory to investigate the role of public relations in non-profit organisations.

### Research hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relations among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationships, and support for non-profit organisations. Based on the literature review, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies (access, positivity, openness, assurance, networking, sharing of tasks) will have a positive effect on the quality of non-profit organisation-public relationships.

Hypothesis 2: The quality of the non-profit organisation-public relationship (commitment, trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, reputation, community involvement, attachment) will increase the likelihood of members' intention to support the organisation (donation and volunteering).

Hypothesis 3: Symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies (access, positivity, openness, assurance, networking, sharing of tasks) will have a positive direct effect on members' intention to support the organisation.

### Method

#### *Sample selection*

For this study, based on ICNPO's (Salamon & Anheier, 1992) categorisation of non-profit organisations, a total of 25 organisations under the 12 non-profit sectors were randomly selected. A letter of solicitation for

participation was sent to these organisations. Five non-profit organisations – Korea Scout Association (group 1: culture and recreation), Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (group 2: education and research), The Republic of Korea National Red Cross (group 3: health), The Korea Water Resources Corporation (group 4: social services), and The Purun Citizen Community (group 6: development and housing) – responded and agreed to participate in this study.

For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to recruit people who have been in contact with the organisations and experienced some extent of the organisations' relationship maintenance strategies. Thus, a purposive sampling was used to recruit members of the five organisations and non-member supporters of the organisations. A survey was conducted during the period from May to June, 2008. With the help of each organisation, 50 to 100 questionnaires were distributed via email to each organisation and posted to its members and supporters. In addition, the researchers attended events at participating organisations and recruited respondents on site.

#### *Survey instrument*

The survey instrument included 22 items for relationship maintenance strategies: four items for access, four items for positivity, five items for openness, four items for assurance, two items for networking, and three items for sharing of tasks. To measure non-profit organisation-public relationships, 47 items were adopted from Hon and Grunig (1999), Kim (2001), and Kim and Lee (2008). Support for non-profit organisations was measured as intention to donate and volunteer. Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 7 ("Strongly agree") were used for all items. Detailed discussion of the operational definition of each concept follows.

- *Symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies.* In this study, symmetrical relationship maintenance strategy was defined as an organisation's communication efforts

used to establish and maintain favourable relationships with its publics. Based on the definition of Hon and Grunig (1999) and Ki and Hon (2007), access was defined as the degree to which publics accessed the information of non-profit organisations and expressed their opinion. Positivity was defined as the non-profit organisations' effort to make the relationship enjoyable. Openness was defined as the degree to which organisations are open and honest to their publics. Assurance was defined as the efforts by organisations to assure their publics that they and their concerns are attended to. Sharing of tasks was defined as organisations' efforts to share and solve their problems or issues together. Networking was the degree of an organisation's efforts to build networks or coalitions with the similar groups in the community. Specific items were imported from Ki and Hon (2006)'s study. Participants were asked to evaluate communication efforts of each non-profit organisation. A multiple-item scale for measuring relationship maintenance strategies was developed to meet the standards of reliability and validity in measurement.

- *Non-profit organisation-public relationships.* Non-profit organisation-public relationship was operationally defined as a construct that is comprised of commitment, trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, reputation, community involvement, and attachment (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kim, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2008). Specifically, commitment was defined as the extent to which publics feel that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain. Trust was defined as the level of confidence and willingness to open organisations to publics. Control mutuality refers to the degree that publics perceive the rightful power to influence organisations. Reputation was defined as a public's perception of the ability and qualifications of the organisation. Community involvement was defined as the degree to which an organisation involves itself in a community's problems or issues. Satisfaction was defined

as the degree of satisfaction about the relationship. Attachment was defined as a public's emotional bond toward the organisation, resulting from the interaction with the organisation.

- *Support for organisation: intent for donation and volunteering.* To measure respondents' intention to support the organisation, six measures including three items for donation intent and three items for volunteering intent were utilised. Donation intent was defined as the intention of donating money and goods or recommending others to donate. Volunteering intent was defined as the intention of participating in the non-profit organisation's activities by their own will or recommending others to volunteer. O'Neil's (2007) items were adopted to measure intention to donate and volunteer.

#### *Pre-test*

Before the actual study, a pre-test was conducted with a group of undergraduate and graduate students (n=50) attending a university in Seoul, South Korea, to refine the survey items. The final version of the questionnaire was constructed after an initial statistical analysis, deleting poorly performing measurement items.

#### **Analysis**

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and 280 participants responded (93 percent response rate). The final sample contained 275 valid cases after eliminating five incomplete questionnaires. Before analysing the hypotheses, the reliability and validity of each variable was tested by conducting Cronbach's  $\alpha$  analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. In the next phase, simple regression analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted to test the hypotheses. Finally, the relations among variables were examined by using composite variables of key concepts through the AMOS structural equation modelling programme.

## Results

### Demographic profiles

Among the total of 275 respondents, 139 (50.5 percent) were male and 136 (49.5 percent) were female. In terms of age, 163 (59.3 percent) were in their 20s, 86 (31.2 percent) were in their 30s, and 26 (9.5 percent) were over 40. There were 217 (78.9 percent) respondents who held a bachelor's degree, 54 (19.6 percent) respondents who held an MA or PhD, and 4 (1.5 percent) respondents were high school graduates.

### Reliability and validity test of relationship maintenance strategies

An exploratory factor analysis for all measurement items was conducted to empirically examine relationship maintenance strategies suggested by Hon and Grunig (1999). The results showed that relationship maintenance strategies consist of five factors instead of six as shown in Table 1: sharing (assurance and sharing of tasks), access, openness, positivity, and networking. These five factors explained 82.94 percent of relationship maintenance strategies. Respondents perceived assurance and sharing of tasks similarly.

**Table 1: Final relationship maintenance strategy scale items**

#### (Sharing)

- The organisation makes a genuine effort to provide personal responses to members' concerns about the issue.
- The organisation's management process allows members adequate opportunity to propose opinions.
- When members raise concerns, the organisation takes these concerns seriously.
- The organisation works with members to develop solutions to the issue.
- The organisation communicates the importance of members.

#### (Access)

- The organisation provides members opportunities to meet officials.
- The organisation provides members adequate contact information for specific staff members on specific issues.
- When members have questions or concerns, the organisation is willing to answer the enquiries.

#### (Openness)

- The organisation shares enough information with members about managing the organisation.
- The organisation's annual report is a valuable source of information about the organisation's activity for members.
- The organisation provides enough information about the organisation.

#### (Positivity)

- The organisation's communication with members is courteous.
- The organisation attempts to willingly communicate with members.
- The organisation is cooperative when handling disagreements with members.

#### (Networking)

- The organisation effectively builds coalitions with groups that impact members.
- The coalitions that the organisation forms with other groups benefit members.

Confirmatory factor analysis using the AMOS programme was conducted to determine if the study's five-factor measurement model adequately fits the data. Several fit indices indicated that the specified model explains the data well: GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) =.908; AGFI (Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index) =.866; RMR (Root Mean Residual) =.088; RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) =.072; NFI (Normed Fit Index) =.942;

CFI(Comparative Fit Index) =.965; TLI(Tucker-Lewis Index) =.955; IFI (Incremental Fit Index) =.965. The result also showed that the proposed model had construct validity, as the standardised regression weights ( $\lambda$ ) were significant. The five factors of relationship maintenance strategies – sharing, access, openness, positivity, and networking – are generally acceptable.

**Reliability and validity test of non-profit organisation-public relationship**

Through exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the organisation-public relationship measures grouped into three factors instead of six, as shown in Table 2. These three factors explained 78.85 percent of organisation-public relationships. This result is similar to what Kim and Lee (2008) found based on a Korean sample. The relationship index they adopted from Hon and Grunig (1999) also clustered into

three factors: commitment, communication symmetry, and community involvement. In this study, factor 1 was composed of control mutuality and trust. We termed this factor relational symmetry. Factor 2 was composed of satisfaction, commitment, and attachment, which we termed emotional connectedness. The third factor was composed of community involvement and reputation, which we termed as sense of community.

**Table 2: Final non-profit organisation-public relationships scale items**

<p>(Relational symmetry)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation really listens to what members have to say.</li> <li>• The organisation gives members enough say in the decision-making process.</li> <li>• Members are satisfied with the organisation’s decision-making process.</li> <li>• The organisation can be relied on to keep its promises.</li> <li>• I believe that the organisation takes the opinions of members into account when making decisions.</li> <li>• The organisation treats members fairly and justly.</li> <li>• Whenever the organisation makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about members.</li> <li>• The organisation’s decision-making process is transparent.</li> <li>• The organisation’s decision-making process is open to members.</li> </ul>
<p>(Emotional connectedness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have an attachment to the organisation.</li> <li>• I have a devotion to the organisation.</li> <li>• I have loyalty to the organisation.</li> <li>• I feel friendship for the organisation.</li> <li>• I would rather work together with the organisation than not.</li> <li>• Compared with other organisations, I value my relationship with this organisation.</li> </ul>
<p>(Sense of community)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation is concerned about the community-related issues that its members are interested in.</li> <li>• The organisation concentrates on community development.</li> <li>• The organisation has more excellent programmes than other organisations.</li> <li>• The organisation fulfils its social responsibility.</li> <li>• The organisation has adaptable organisational culture.</li> </ul>

Confirmatory factor analysis using the AMOS programme was conducted to determine if the study’s measurement model adequately fits the data. Several fit indexes indicated that the specified model explains the data well: GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) =.832, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) =.077, NFI (Normed Fit Index) =.917, CFI (Comparative Fit Index) =.947, TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) =.940, IFI (Incremental Fit Index) =.947. The result also showed that the proposed model had construct validity in that standardised regression weights ( $\lambda$ ) were significant. This meant that the three-factor

model of organisation-public relationships is generally acceptable.

**Relation between symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies and non-profit organisation-public relationships**

Regression analysis using the composite index variables of relationship management strategies and OPR was conducted to test Hypothesis 1. As shown in Table 3, the results confirmed Hypothesis 1, indicating that relationship maintenance strategies positively influence non-profit organisation-public relationships (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=.538).

Park, H. & Rhee, Y. (2010). Associations among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationships, and support for organisations: An exploratory study of the non-profit sector. *PRism* 7(2): [http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/prism\\_on-line\\_journ.html](http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/prism_on-line_journ.html)

**Table 3: The influence of relationship maintenance strategies on OPR**

D.V	I.V	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
OPR	Relationship maintenance strategies	.730	.041	.734	17.875	.000	.538 (F=319.518, p=.000)

To investigate the relations among each dimension of relationship maintenance strategies and non-profit organisation-public relationships, multiple regression analysis was conducted. As shown in Table 4, the influence of relationship maintenance strategies on relational symmetry was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ); and explanation power was 64 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = .645$ ). Specifically, sharing ( $\beta = .636$ ,  $t = 11.223$ ) and positivity ( $\beta = .205$ ,  $t = 3.610$ ) were significant factors in this association. Table 4 also showed the significant

( $p < 0.05$ ) influence of relationship maintenance strategies on emotional connectedness (Adjusted  $R^2 = .243$ ). Sharing ( $\beta = .353$ ,  $t = 5.416$ ) and access ( $\beta = .192$ ,  $t = 2.941$ ) had the most significant impact on emotional connectedness. The influence of relationship maintenance strategies on sense of community was also significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and explanatory power was 50 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = .500$ ). Sharing ( $\beta = .429$ ,  $t = 4.815$ ) was the only factor that had influence on sense of community.

**Table 4: The associations among each dimension of relationship maintenance strategies and OPR**

D.V.	I.V.	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Relational symmetry	Sharing	.584	.076	.627	7.675	.000	.194	5.160	.645 (F=100.708, p=.000)
	Access	.039	.046	.043	.843	.400	.506	1.977	
	Openness	.100	.063	.102	1.573	.117	.310	3.225	
	Networking	-.059	.066	-.061	-.901	.369	.284	3.521	
	Positivity	.126	.059	.145	2.144	.033	.282	3.545	
Emotional connectedness	Sharing	.295	.124	.284	2.381	.018	.194	5.160	.243 (F=18.562, p=.000)
	Access	.223	.075	.219	2.961	.003	.506	1.977	
	Openness	.048	.103	.044	.463	.643	.310	3.225	
	Networking	.188	.107	.173	1.757	.080	.284	3.521	
	Positivity	-.160	.096	-.165	-1.666	.097	.282	3.545	
Sense of community	Sharing	.414	.096	.417	4.301	.000	.194	5.160	.500 (F=52.478, p=.000)
	Access	.083	.058	.086	1.424	.156	.506	1.977	
	Openness	.131	.080	.125	1.628	.105	.310	3.225	
	Networking	.106	.083	.103	1.279	.202	.284	3.521	
	Positivity	.052	.075	.056	.698	.486	.282	3.545	

### Relation between organisation-public relationships and support for non-profit organisation

Regression analysis using the composite index variables was conducted to investigate the relation between organisation-public relationships and support for non-profit organisations.

As shown in Table 5 (over the page), the results confirmed Hypothesis 2, indicating that organisation-public relationships positively affect support for non-profit organisations (Adjusted  $R^2 = .253$ ).

**Table 5: The influence of OPR on non-profit organisational support**

D.V	I.V	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Non-profit organisational support	OPR	.713	.074	.506	9.687	.000	.253 (F=98.830, p=.000)

To investigate the associations among each dimension of organisation-public relationships and support for non-profit organisations, multiple regression analysis was conducted. As shown in Table 6, influence of non-profit organisation-public relationships on donation intention was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ); and explanation power was 20 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = .201$ ). Specifically, while emotional connectedness ( $\beta = .410$ ,  $t = 6.065$ ) and sense of

community ( $\beta = .219$ ,  $t = 2.266$ ) were significant factors, relational symmetry was insignificant. The influence of non-profit organisation-public relationships on volunteering intention was also significant ( $p < 0.05$ ); and explanation power was 34 percent (Adjusted  $R^2 = .344$ ). Both emotional connectedness ( $\beta = .472$ ,  $t = 7.719$ ) and sense of community ( $\beta = .326$ ,  $t = 3.728$ ) were significantly related to donation intent.

**Table 6: The associations among each dimension of OPR and support for non-profit organisation**

D.V.	I.V.	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Donation intention	Relational symmetry	-.236	.138	-.165	-.711	.088	.313	3.194	.201 (F=23.932, p=.000)
	Emotional connectedness	.525	.087	.410	6.065	.000	.639	1.565	
	Sense of community	.293	.129	.219	2.266	.024	.312	3.202	
Volunteering intention	Relational symmetry	-.249	.127	-.171	-1.958	.051	.313	3.194	.344 (F=48.995, p=.000)
	Emotional connectedness	.616	.080	.472	7.719	.000	.639	1.565	
	Sense of community	.445	.119	.326	3.728	.000	.312	3.202	

### Relation between relationship maintenance strategies and support for non-profit organisations

Hypothesis 3 presupposed that there is a direct association between relationship maintenance strategies and non-profit support for non-profit

organisations. Regression analysis using the composite index variables was conducted to test Hypothesis 3. As shown in Table 7, the results confirmed Hypothesis 3, indicating that relationship maintenance strategies positively affect support for non-profit organisations (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=.131).

**Table 7: The influence of relationship maintenance strategies on support for non-profit organisation**

D.V	I.V	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Non-profit organisational support</b>	Relationship maintenance strategies	.507	.079	.362	6.413	.000	.131 (F=41.121, p=.000)

However, as Table 8 shows, the relation was insignificant when the influence of non-profit organisation-public relationships was controlled. This means that the relation between

non-profit organisation-public relationships and support for non-profit organisations is fully mediated by relationship maintenance strategies.

**Table 8: The result of multiple regression analysis among variables**

D.V	I.V	B	S.E.	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Organisational support</b>	OPR	.735	.109	.521	6.762	.000	.251 (F=46.792, p=.000)
	Relationship maintenance strategies	-.029	.108	-.021	-.270	.787	

\*Stepwise: relationship maintenance strategies was eliminated (p=.787).

### SEM (structural equation modelling)

After conducting exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis for the variables, the theoretical model was modified as shown in Figure 1. A SEM analysis showed that most paths were significant except for the

path from relationship maintenance strategies to support for non-profit organisations. Thus, as shown in Table 9, Hypothesis 1 and 2 were confirmed while Hypothesis 3 was rejected. This result meant that OPR fully mediated between relationship maintenance strategies and support for the organisations.

Figure 1: Path coefficients of full model

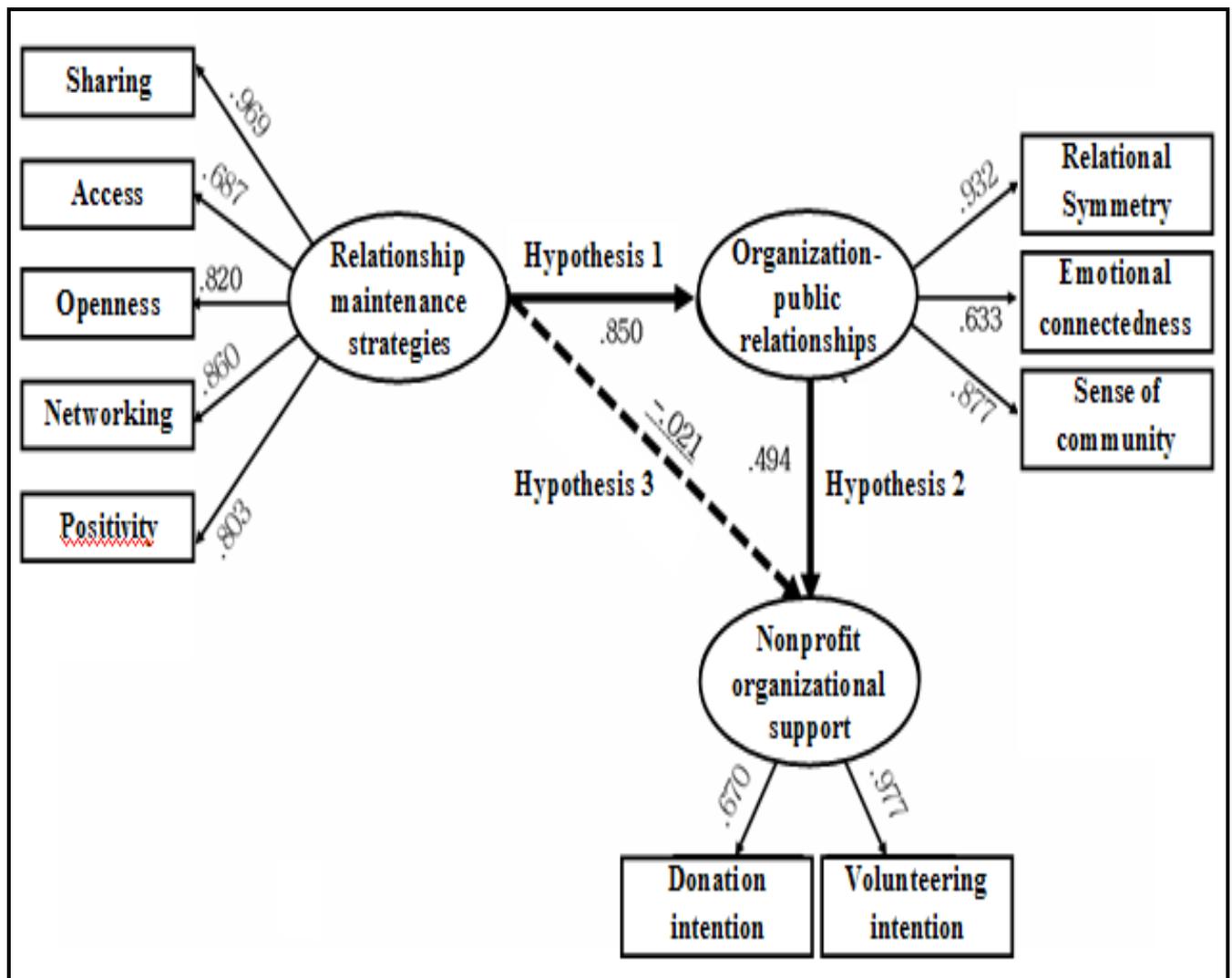


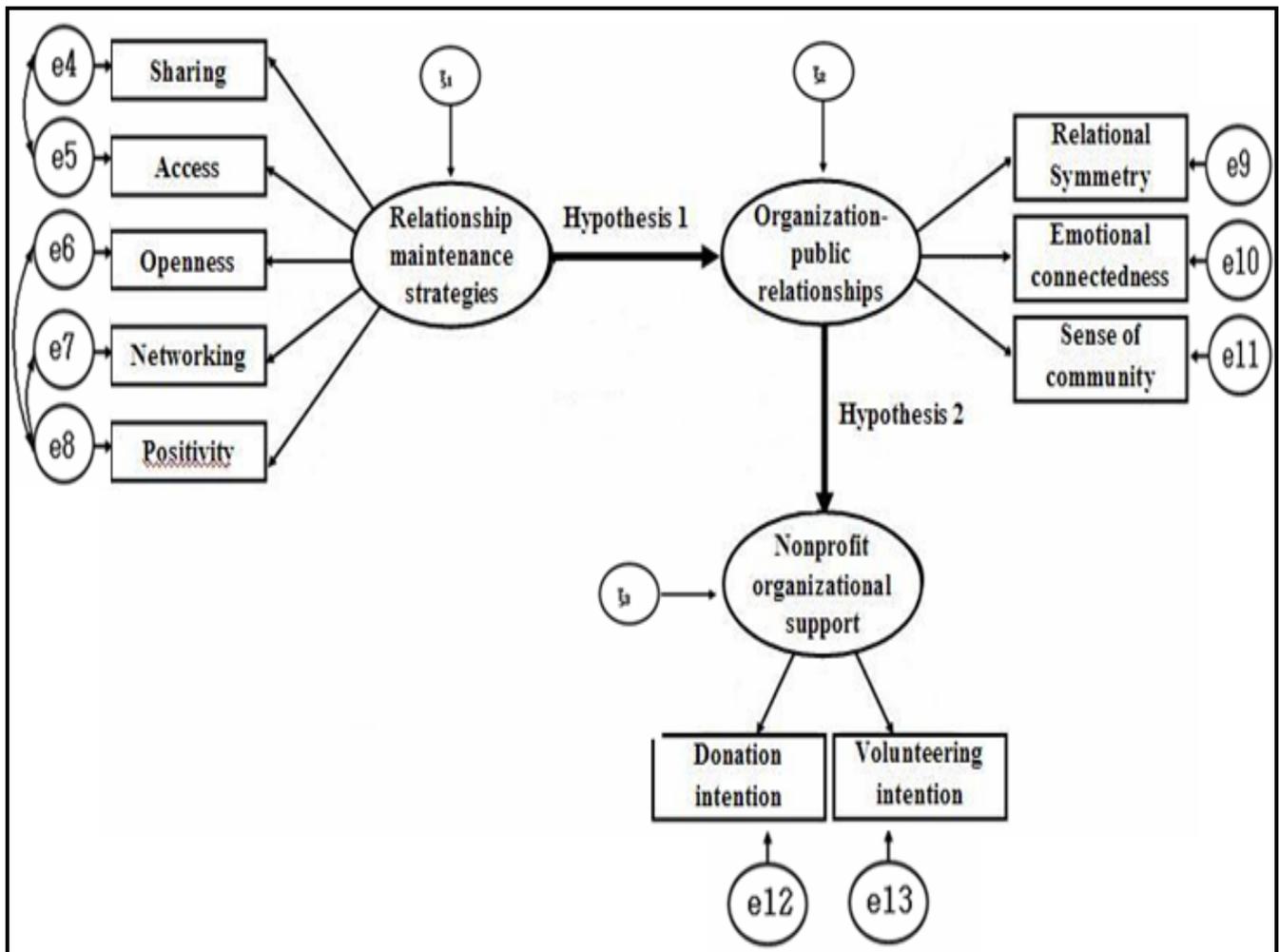
Table 9: The result of SEM

Hypotheses	Causal relationship	unstandardised regression weights ( $\lambda$ )	standardised regression weights ( $\lambda$ )	Sig.	acceptance
Hypothesis 1	Relationship maintenance strategies → OPR	.857	.850	.000	accepted
Hypothesis 2	OPR → support for non-profit organisation	.753	.494	.000	accepted
Hypothesis 3	Relationship maintenance strategies → support for non-profit organisation	-.032	-.021	.867	not accepted

In the next phase, the path from relationship maintenance strategies to support for non-profit organisations (Hypothesis 3) was eliminated. The full model was modified to increase the fit index by using modification indices and

permitting the covariance among error terms as shown in Figure 2. Covariance among error terms could be supposed because relationship maintenance strategies in this study were comprised of symmetrical communication.

**Figure 2: Final theoretical model**



Several fit index were GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) =.912, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) = .112, NFI (Normed Fit Index) =.938, CFI (Comparative Fit Index) =.951, TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) =.926, IFI (Incremental Fit Index) =.951; and standardised regression weights ( $\lambda$ ) are significant.

Thus, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 were supported. Finally, the associations among variables are as follows: (1) relationship maintenance strategies→ organisation -public relationships (Hypothesis 1), (2) organisation-

public relationships→ support for non -profit organisation (Hypothesis 2) and (3) organisation-public relationships fully mediated the relation between relationship maintenance strategies and organisation-public relationships. The results support the idea that organisation-public relationships are a significant variable to promote publics' support for the non-profit organisation. Thus, the public relations department of non-profit organisations should fulfil not only communication tasks but also relationship management tasks.

## Discussion and conclusion

### *Summary of the results*

By adopting the relationship management theory, this study attempted to empirically examine the associations among relationship management strategies, organisation-public relationship, and intention to support the organisation. In other words, the study explored whether the quality of relationships developed by specific relationship maintenance strategies can generate intention for donation and volunteering. Through a thorough literature review, three key variables – relationship management strategies, organisation-public relationships, intention to support organisation – were operationalised. A theoretical model regarding the relationships among these variables was proposed.

Results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis showed that there are five factors of relationship maintenance strategies: sharing, access, openness, positivity, and networking. Hon and Grunig's (1999) assurance (the effort by an organisation to assure its publics that they and their concerns are attended to) and sharing of tasks (organisations sharing in solving problems) were perceived as similar concepts by the respondents. Thus, a sharing factor was newly constructed and defined as the degree of sharing of effort to maintain relationships.

Factor analysis results indicated that the non-profit organisation-public relationship dimension is constructed of three factors: relational symmetry (composed of control mutuality and trust), emotional connectedness (composed of satisfaction, commitment, and attachment), and sense of community (composed of community involvement and reputation). In particular, the existence of emotional connectedness that includes the attachment concept proposed by Korean scholars Kim and Lee (2008) indicated that the dimensions of organisation-public relationships may be perceived differently in non-Western cultures. Future studies could explore cultural

differences in the dimensions of non-profit organisation-public relationships.

Through a series of regression analysis, proposed hypothesis were tested. It was found that symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies had positive influence on NOPR (H1). In particular, the influence of relationship maintenance strategies such as sharing and access on relational symmetry was significant. Sharing and access were also the most significant maintenance strategies affecting emotional connectedness. In other words, publics are likely to perceive their relationships with organisations as symmetrical and feel familiar with the organisations when they think organisations exert collaborative efforts with the publics and provide ample access to information and relevant contact persons within the organisation.

It was also found that organisation-public relationships do affect publics' intentions to provide support for non-profit organisations (H2). Emotional connectedness was the most significant factor that influenced intention to support non-profit organisations. This indicates that publics are more likely to become donors and volunteers when they feel emotional attachment to the organisation. Sense of community was another significant factor affecting intention to support. This result can be considered quite natural in that non-profit organisations are established for the public interest. In other words, the non-profit organisation's level of community involvement would be considered a key factor in publics' decision-making for providing support. However, the influence of relational symmetry on support for non-profit organisations was insignificant. This meant that publics do not necessarily think having a balanced relationship with the organisation is more important in making decisions to support the organisation than having emotional connectedness with the organisation.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis revealed that organisation-public relationships fully mediated the associations between relationship maintenance strategies and organisational support. In other words, just

as the relationship management theory suggests, for non-profit organisations, public relations should be seen as a function that opts for initiation and development of positive relationships with its publics through strategic communication. In conclusion, findings of this study suggest that through symmetrical communication efforts, non-profit organisations can foster favourable relationships with their publics and these relationships in turn increase the likelihood of publics' donation and volunteering. Thus, public relations practitioners in non-profit organisations can opt to develop programmes for positive organisation-public relationships, which would then increase the chance of publics' support for organisations.

### *Implications and limitations*

This study has several important contributions to the public relations scholarship and practice. First, it contributes to theoretical developments explicating the associations among relationship maintenance strategies, organisation-public relationships, and support for non-profit organisations. This study contributed to the advancement of relationship management theory by empirically testing the validity and reliability of relationship maintenance strategies concepts. In addition, the study also examined the linear relations between relationship outcomes and other tangible outcome variables such as donation and volunteering. Despite a large number of previous studies on relationship building, few studies focused on non-profit organisations. By focusing on non-profit organisations, this study found that symmetrical communication can cultivate relationships between non-profit organisations and their publics, which in turn may foster publics' intention to support the non-profit organisation.

Public relations practitioners for non-profit organisations can use these findings to develop relationship building programmes with donors and volunteers and demonstrate the value of symmetrical communication to their organisations and senior managers.

Specifically, the use of relationship maintenance strategies such as sharing and access in particular, may help non-profit organisations to generate good relationships with their publics and their intention to support the organisation in forms of monetary donation and volunteering. In other words, practitioners should try to consider and develop specific strategies and tactics to raise access and sharing. For example, non-profit organisations could build an effective website for publics to easily access information about the organisation. In terms of sharing, non-profit organisations could plan forums or seminars through which publics can express their opinions so they may perceive that the organisation tries to share ideas about management.

However, the significant limitation in this study is that its sampling frame was purposive. The survey for this study was conducted with the members of five non-profit organisations. Thus, it is difficult to generalise the results of this study to the public relations practice of all non-profit organisations. Future studies should consider many different kinds of non-profit organisations to develop a more valid and reliable non-profit organisation-public relationship instrument.

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