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THE INTERPLAY OF PERSONAL AND CORPORATE REPUTATION: BUILDING CREDIBILITY ACROSS LEVELS

A INTERAÇÃO ENTRE REPUTAÇÃO PESSOAL E CORPORATIVA: CONSTRUINDO CREDIBILIDADE EM VÁRIOS NÍVEIS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between personal and corporate reputation. It explores how both are perceived in organizational behavior, as well as in sociology and marketing. Personal reputation is an intangible asset comprising ethics, trust, and social capital. The article also examines how corporate reputation is used as a strategic resource to sustain and enhance a company's legitimacy and generate a sustainable competitive advantage. A comparative research framework is developed based on classic and up-to-date studies on personal and corporate reputation. The methodology consists of a literature-based synthesis following the Gioia approach for conceptual rigor. The results indicate that personal and corporate reputation are complementary and, in different ways, influence trust, stability and sustainability in various situations. The article also highlights implications for theory and practice as well as lessons learned, limitations and future research avenues.

Keywords: Reputation; Personal branding; Corporate reputation; Organizational legitimacy; Trust.

RESUMO

Este artigo examina a relação entre reputação pessoal e corporativa. Ele explora como ambas são percebidas no comportamento organizacional, bem como na sociologia e no marketing. A reputação pessoal é um ativo intangível que compreende ética, confiança e capital social. O artigo também examina como a reputação corporativa é usada como recurso estratégico para sustentar e fortalecer a

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legitimidade de uma empresa e gerar uma vantagem competitiva sustentável. Um arcabouço de pesquisa comparativa é desenvolvido com base em estudos clássicos e atualizados sobre reputação pessoal e corporativa. A metodologia consiste em uma síntese baseada em literatura seguindo a abordagem Gioia para rigor conceitual. Os resultados indicam que a reputação pessoal e corporativa são complementares e, de maneiras diferentes, influenciam confiança, estabilidade e sustentabilidade em diversas situações. O artigo também destaca implicações para teoria e prática, bem como lições aprendidas, limitações e caminhos de pesquisa futura.

Palavras-chave: Reputação; Marca pessoal; Reputação corporativa; Legitimidade organizacional; Confiança.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of reputation has long been central to research on organizations in organizational studies, sociology, psychology, and marketing ((Barney, 1991; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Ferris et al.,1998, 2003; Ferris & Judge, 1991). Reputation can be viewed in terms of three main concepts: social judgment, strategic resource, and intangible asset (Galang, Elsik; Russ., 1999; Gioia; Schultz; Corley 2000; Teece; Pisano; Shuen, 1997; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). This article considers two key types of reputation: personal reputation and corporate reputation. Whilst the two have different roots and develop through somewhat different processes, they are inextricably linked and affect each other in significant ways at individual, organizational, and even societal levels.

Personal reputation generally refers to several judgments made by a community or social group about an individual's characteristics, such as honesty, ethics, integrity, or trustworthiness (Emler, 1990). Such judgments can be both positive and negative and are based on observations of an individual’s behavior over time. A person’s reputation is thus susceptible to being readily damaged by one episode of behavior. The work of several influential researchers (Baumeister, 1982; Ferris et al., 2003; Ferris, 1999) suggests that personal reputation has value as a form of social capital that enables the individual to influence others, obtain resources, and secure employment in organizations to achieve desired goals. Here, reputation transcends simple perception and becomes an intangible, durable asset of great value to the individual.

Research has shown that corporate reputation is a strategic resource and a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Argenti, 2004; Barney, 1991; Argenti; Druckenmiller, 2004; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Hannington,2011). Corporate reputation is institutionalized through brand, stakeholder relationships, and company identity. It can thus substitute for contracts and other control mechanisms, lowering transaction costs and building trust between market actors. A firm’s corporate reputation is thus not only a valuable marketing asset but also a basis for sustainable organizational resilience (Dowling, 2004; Hannington, 2011; Suchman, 1995). Leadership in organizations can significantly impact both personal and corporate reputation (Bromley, 2001; Noorman, 1984; Petrick et al., 1999). By acting credibly, sincerely, and responsibly, executives and managers build the organization's credibility and, in turn, organizations with a strong corporate reputation grant their leaders additional reputational capital; because of this reciprocal relationship between personal and corporate reputation, a comparative study of both is needed.

Relationships also exist between reputation and image (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), and between reputation and personal branding (Bromley, 1993; Goffman, 1959). Image relates to immediate, sometimes situational first impressions, whereas branding involves impression management and differentiation in a strategic, intentional manner. In this sense, image and branding are not the same as reputation. Rather, they are a basis, or even a starting point, for it. As such, they lie between spontaneous perception and intentional management, linking authenticity with strategy and the individual with the organization.

In today’s world, it is well known that the leader's reputation significantly influences the organization’s reputation. In a globalized and highly digitalized world, the leader's personal conduct is exposed to stakeholders and the public in ways previously unknown. Many organizations are now under increasing scrutiny regarding governance, sustainability, and ethics. Hence, corporate reputation is a major determinant of organizations’ competitiveness and legitimacy. In several fields, reputation is a universal mechanism for credibility (Azar & Dias, 2026; Bastos & Dias, 2026a; 2026b; 2026c; 2026d; Moraes & Dias, 2026; Sartorio & Dias, 2026). Therefore, this article contributes to the comparative study of the two types of reputation through a literature-based review that develops a comparative framework and applies the Gioia approach to analyze the literature (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Ultimately, this contribution to the field can also provide new insights for organizations on how to develop, manage, and measure their personal and corporate reputations.

This study seeks to contribute to both practice and theory, by outlining a framework for personal and corporate reputation and investigating their interactions, in an attempt to emphasize the importance of managing reputation at different levels, to get the most out of the currently existing divergence between individual credibility and organizational legitimacy and to open up new avenues for future research with a quantitative approach, specifically within the scope of digital communication and in a globalized world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of reputation studies has been investigated from various disciplinary angles (Galang, Elsik; Russ., 1999; Gioia; Schultz; Corley 2000; Teece; Pisano; Shuen, 1997; Zinko & Rubin, 2015). By synthesizing key findings on theoretical background, methodology, practical results, and differences between the two types of reputation, this literature review aims to highlight their interdependence and mark the main distinctions between personal and corporate reputation. *Reputation* is a word that comes from Latin *reputatio, - onis*, meaning thinking carefully, or thinking over, including terms as prestige, stand, and status (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Personal Reputation has been defined and studied as the cumulative judgment a community has of an individual (often referred to as character). This 'reputation' can be a form of social capital (Baumeister, 1982; Emler, 1990; Ferris et al., 2003). It is often based on consistent behavior and is viewed by the individual as fragile and easily destroyed by one misstep in ethical behavior (Baron & Markman, 2000; Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980). At its core, individuals' reputations are highly subjective. In terms of moral consistency, individuals are perceived in a very positive or very negative light by others (more so than organizations). As a result of this highly positive or negative perception, several outcomes can occur for that individual, including exercising influence, gaining access to resources, and obtaining and maintaining desirable positions within organizations (for example, Ferris et al., 2003; Ferris & Judge, 1991).

In contrast, the study of **Corporate Reputation** as a strategic resource or intangible asset has attracted considerable attention (Barney, 1991; Dowling, 2004; Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Hall, 1992; Suchman, 1995; Teece et al., 1997). Viewed through the resource-based view of the firm, a company's reputation can act as a valuable intangible resource, reducing transaction costs and mitigating risk by substituting for contracts and generating trust among actors. An organization's corporate reputation is institutionalized and collective, consisting of organizational identity, branding, and stakeholder relationships. In contrast to the fragile nature of personal reputation, which depends on context and can change quickly because of one negative action, corporate reputation is far more resilient. It is supported by an organization's structures, policies, and communication systems.

The main difference between the two types of reputation is scope and formation. While **Personal Reputation** is based on an individual's ethics, trust, and authenticity, **Corporate Reputation** is founded on organizational legitimacy, stakeholder management, and a company's strategic orientation (Fombrun, 1996; Suchman, 1995). Personal reputation is sensitive to context and often frail, whereas corporate reputation is less fragile and supported by an institution and a collective identity of an organization.

Leadership studies of personal and corporate reputation have demonstrated that leaders' credibility as individuals influences stakeholders' perceptions of the organization. Conversely, how stakeholders perceive a corporation can increase or decrease the credibility of its leaders. A rich area for further research in organizational studies concerns the interplay of personal and corporate reputation and how this can impact upon organizational behavior (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris et al., 2003; Gioia et al., 2000). From an image and personal branding perspective, studies have found that perceived organizational environment (POE), developed by senior managers (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), reflects others' immediate perceptions. Such an image can be short-lived and sensitive to situational factors (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Unlike impression management (Goffman, 1959), personal branding is grounded in deliberate, strategic visibility (Bromley, 1993). As the above discussion highlights, such reputation develops from authenticity and a set of ethics that underpin an individual's actions. In contrast, organizational reputation solidifies an organization's identity and embodies its legitimacy.

Recent studies on reputation have addressed topics related to the digital environment, sustainability, healthcare, and negotiation. In healthcare, a study found that institutional reputation plays a relevant role in how patients perceive and establish management of rare diseases (Moraes & Dias, 2026). In sustainability, corporate reputation, as measured by ESG (environment, social responsibility, and governance) indicators, can be a relevant source of competitive advantage for companies (Azar & Dias, 2026a; Azar & Dias, 2026c). In negotiation, reputation is an important factor in establishing trust and managing conflict to achieve goals in encounters and negotiations (Dias et al., 2026; Sartorio & Dias, 2026). Unlike personal reputation that is pivotal in individual encounters, corporate reputation facilitates trust in an institution and its structure.

These studies have utilized various methods in studying reputation including qualitative approaches to understand concepts and constructs through thematic synthesis of data from case studies through interpretive coding (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and quantitative approaches in studying the correlation between reputation and brand equity, consumer purchase intention, and firm performance (Biel, 1992; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Kujur & Roy, 2026; Zhu et al., 2026). Qualitative approaches have been applied more often to personal reputation in studies of ethics and behavior. In contrast, corporate reputation has been measured quantitatively using various performance indicators and stakeholder perceptions. Reputation, both personal and corporate, can be studied using the above approaches. Thus, whereas personal reputation is studied in reference to ethics and behavior using qualitative approaches, institutionalized, collective, and strategically managed reputation is studied in reference to quantitative performance indicators and perception data from various stakeholders. Nonetheless, personal and corporate reputation are two distinct but interrelated constructs that form the basis of trust, credibility, and the ability to withstand stress in organizational life and in the broader society of which it is a part.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative methodology grounded in a literature review. More specifically, it draws on Gioia et al. (2013), which uses a systematic coding approach to conceptualize the review's findings.We selected articles from the areas of psychology, sociology, organizational behavior and strategic management, such as some foundational works (Baumeister, 1982; Barney, 1991; Fombrun, 1996; Suchman, 1995), recent studies on issues related to sustainability (Azar & Dias, 2026a), health (Moraes & Dias, 2026), negotiation (Sartorio & Dias, 2026) and the digital age (Azar & Dias, 2026a), as well as recent works by some of the current authors (Bastos & Dias, 2026; Bastos, Dias & Silva Jr., 2026).

Categorization and coding were followed within two main domains of study: personal reputation and corporate reputation. Under personal reputation, ethics, trust, and social capital were categorized into first-order concepts and then aggregated into themes. These were then grouped into dimensions, including ‘individual credibility’. Under corporate reputation, legitimacy, branding and organizational resilience were categorized as first-order concepts and then aggregated into themes. These were then aggregated into two dimensions: ‘organizational legitimacy’. Personal and corporate reputation are different but complementary. Personal reputation is sensitive, relationship-based, and context-dependent. Corporate reputation is institution-based, collective, and can be managed strategically. Both are important in leadership situations, where personal credibility strengthens corporate legitimacy. Recent studies on reputation have integrated it into analysis and are developing new paths for such studies, especially in digital environments and sustainable finance (Bastos & Dias, 2026).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our research, therefore, established that personal reputation and corporate reputation are two distinct yet complementary entities. Personal reputation is fragile, relational, and ethical, while corporate reputation is institutionalized, collective, and strategic. The point of intersection between personal reputation and corporate reputation is leadership. Much contemporary research on reputation extends to areas such as sustainability, health, negotiation, and digital governance, underscoring the ubiquity of reputation and its role in shaping trust and legitimacy. Table 1 illustrates the main findings.

Table 1 *Personal vs. Corporate Reputation: A Comparative Framework*

Dimension	Personal Reputation	Corporate Reputation
Scope	Individual, relational, based on ethics and behavior (Baumeister, 1982; Emler, 1990; Ferris et al., 2003; Zinko & Rubin, 2015).	Collective, institutional, based on organizational identity and stakeholder relations (Barney, 1991; Fombrun, 1996; Dowling, 2004; Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004).
Mechanism of Formation	Built through consistent conduct, authenticity, and impression management (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980; Baron & Markman, 2000).	Formed through branding, strategic communication, and institutional legitimacy (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Olins, 1989; Suchman, 1995).
Resilience	Fragile, easily compromised by ethical lapses or inconsistency (Baumeister, 1982; Schlenker, 1980).	More resilient, supported by organizational structures, policies, and communication strategies (Dowling, 2004; Bromley, 2001).
Measurement	Often studied qualitatively, focusing on ethics, trust, and authenticity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Ferris et al., 1998).	Frequently measured quantitatively via brand equity, purchase intent, and performance indicators (Biel, 1992; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Keller, 1993).
Leadership Role	Leaders' credibility directly shapes organizational perception (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000).	Corporate reputation reinforces leaders' legitimacy, providing reputational capital (Granovetter, 1985; Petrick et al., 1999).
Contemporary Applications	Decisive in negotiations and interpersonal trust-building (Gamson, 1966; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994).	Central in sustainability, corporate image, and competitive advantage (Hall, 1992; Teece et al., 1997; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001).

Note: Table prepared based on Baumeister (1982), Emler (1990), Goffman (1959), Schlenker (1980), Baron and Markman (2000), Zinko and Rubin (2015) for personal reputation; and Barney (1991), Fombrun (1996), Fombrun and Shanley (1990), Dowling (2004), Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004), Olins (1989), Suchman (1995), Hall (1992), Keller (1993), and Petrick et al. (1999) for corporate reputation.

Table 1 shows that while both have been the subject of increasing research in recent years, they differ markedly in the levels of formative processes and the empirical methods used to study them. Leaders' personal reputation is studied largely through qualitative research that uncovers the substance of reputation by exploring ethics. Corporate reputation, on the other hand, is often studied through quantitative studies designed to test theory concerning brand equity and image (Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995). While the structures differ, processes have the same overall objective: sufficient credibility to maintain trust in the face of reference information that could threaten that trust.

Personal reputation formation has been studied within the context of impression management (Baron & Markman, 2000; Goffman, 1959). Corporate reputation, on the other hand, is seen as being influenced by a company's branding, communication, and overall perceived legitimacy by stakeholders (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Olins, 1989; Suchman, 1995). Methodologically, qualitative studies of personal reputation focus on content analysis of aspects and authenticity (Ferris et al., 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In contrast, corporate reputation has been studied quantitatively using measures of brand equity, purchase intent, and company performance (Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995).

Leadership is key to connecting both personal and corporate reputation. A leader's credibility affects how people perceive an organization. In contrast, an organization's reputation can add to a leader's legitimacy and provide reputational capital that transcends an individual's attributes. Thus, understanding reputation within a personal framework is not entirely different from a corporate one. Sufficient similarities and reciprocal relationships between the two are well worth studying within the confines of this paper.

Furthermore, image and branding differ: image is, by definition, volatile and circumstantial (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) and therefore belongs to the phenomenal world of an organization's reception; branding, by contrast, is more stable and deliberate (Bromley, 1993). By consolidating image and branding, however, reputation becomes a lasting commitment based on the two aforementioned types of perceptions of an organization by others, thereby translating them into lasting credibility (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Rao, 1994) for the organization as a whole.

Reputation is therefore relevant for negotiations (trust-building; Gamson 1966; Kilduff & Krackhardt 1994) as well as for sustainability and corporate governance (creating legitimacy and competitive advantage for organizations in the market; Hall 1992; Teece et al. 1997; Gotsi & Wilson 2001). And whatever the domain between interpersonal and organizational, credibility is created by reputation that in turn is shaped by it.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The comparison of personal and corporate reputation, as done in this study, is highly relevant for organizational research and practice. Viewing personal and corporate reputation as separate entities that together form a single entity of reputational capital can help bridge the divide between individual-level, ethics-driven relational reputation and organization-level, branding-driven strategic reputation. For instance, individuals can enhance their relational reputation by engaging in ethics-based behavior and presenting themselves authentically. Once they attain credibility, they must recognize its fragility. On the other hand, organizations are advised to focus on branding efforts, good governance, and stakeholder engagement to develop their corporate reputation as a vital strategic resource (Olins, 1989; Suchman, 1995; Teece et al., 1997). Reputational capital can function as a universal credibility mechanism in various organizational contexts, including negotiation, sustainability, and health care, and can influence trust at both interpersonal and institutional levels (Gamson, 1966; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; Hall, 1992; Kilduff and Krackhardt, 1994; Zinko and Rubin, 2015).

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is valuable to both organization theory and practice in several ways. The study's primary contribution is a new comparative framework for understanding personal and corporate reputation. In developing this framework, the study draws on the full range of research within the field of organization and management and develops new insights based on its findings. Specifically, the study demonstrates the function of reputation as both social capital and strategic resource, providing leaders, professionals and organizations with new insights that can be put into practice. The study examines in some detail the nature of personal and corporate reputation in several contexts including leadership, sustainability and negotiation. The findings demonstrate that reputation is a universal mechanism of credibility and therefore a feature of all organizational and social life. In terms of developing new theoretical insights, the study provides particularly strong insights into how leadership can develop a positive organizational reputation by aligning personal and corporate reputation. The study also provides new and interesting insights into the application of reputation across a range of organizational and social contexts. It demonstrates its central role in creating trust and sustaining legitimacy and competitive advantage in a variety of environments.

7. CONCLUSION

Our analysis has been grounded in both classic and contemporary literature, and we hope that, in addition to developing a useful framework for the concept of reputation, it also highlights several useful implications for both scholarship and practice. In essence, we have attempted to draw together several fragmented concepts and to provide a single, but comparative framework of personal and corporate reputation. The findings of our analysis have also served to emphasize the importance of reputation as an intangible asset, underpinning trust, legitimacy and competitive advantage in a variety of organizational environments and within a range of contexts including sustainability, negotiation and healthcare, and constituting a universal mechanism of credibility that is both relational and managed (Gamson, 1966; Goffman, 1959; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Zinko and Rubin, 2015).

8. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could examine how personal and corporate reputations are affected by digital environments and social media. It would also be worth studying how reputational capital interacts with emerging topics such as ESG integration, artificial intelligence governance, and global leadership (Suchman, 1995; Teece et al., 1997; Zinko and Rubin, 2015). In addition to these studies, qualitative and quantitative studies could also be combined. This kind of research would bridge the relational, ethics-driven research with the performance-based research (Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Zinko and Rubin, 2015). In addition, studies that present different strategies for managing personal and corporate reputation would be useful. These studies would emphasize the importance of leadership in managing personal and corporate reputation (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000). Comparative studies across industries and cultures could also show how reputation functions in different environments and thus underline its universality as social capital and a strategic resource.

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