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Assessment of Public Relations Strategies Adopted by the Nigeria Police in Its Image Management

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Abstract

This study examines public relations strategies adopted by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in managing its institutional image, with particular attention to how these strategies shape public perceptions and mitigate negative publicity. Using a descriptive survey design, questionnaires were distributed to a randomly selected sample of respondents through simple random sampling to assess the relationship between public relations practice and image management within the NPF. The findings indicate a significant positive impact of public relations strategies on improving the public image of the Nigeria Police Force, confirming that well-crafted and consistently implemented communication efforts contribute to enhanced public perception. At the same time, the study identifies persistent impediments that constrain the effectiveness of these strategies, including structural and operational challenges within the organization. The study concludes that prioritizing media relations, adopting a more strategic and evidence-informed approach to addressing the identified constraints, and conducting a comprehensive review of existing public relations strategies—grounded in open and transparent communication and stakeholder feedback—are critical for

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strengthening image management. These conclusions underscore the need for the Nigeria Police Force to institutionalize responsive, dialogic public relations practices as part of broader efforts to rebuild public trust.

Keywords: Public Relations; Nigeria Police Force; Image Management; Communication Strategies; Public Perception.

Introduction

World over, there exist particular state apparatus established by the government to sustain peace, national security, safeguard lives and properties, and administer law and order (Omoloa et al., 2017). In Nigeria, one amongst the apparatus is the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) established on April 1, 1930, precursory of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, with headquarters in Lagos and now Abuja. The police is described as the fundamental law enforcement apparatus of the state (Eleonu & Winston, 2019), culminating into the agents of the executive arm of government authorized to enforce the law, and guarantee social order via legitimate use of force. Further to this, the police being an agency of government is made-up of men and women structured by the state as a paramilitary force, saddled with the sole responsibility of defending the status-quo. This reflects the police as the enforcer of laws, values and ideologies, which justify, legitimize and guard prevalent distribution of power and wealth in a society.

The Nigeria police is, recognized as an indispensable organization, charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order (Eleonu & Winston, 2019). Further, the police are an instrument of social control in a society, making them the most visible and closest arm of the criminal justice system. According to Opolot (1995), policing deals with protection, which is a function of protecting people's rights to life, dignity, liberty and property usually against criminals or law-breakers. Additionally, policing is a phase in every modern criminal justice system, and functions to curb or eliminate crime in any society. However, it necessitates a great deal of training, skills and experience to be practical and effective in crime prevention. As the principal law enforcement agent of the state, Opolot further explains that policing, requires so much sacrifice, which may also include their lives. Consequently, the nature of any police and the form of policing in a given society is a reflection of the state that established it.

The issue of police public image generates interest not only in Nigeria but also, in the world today (Eleonu & Winston, 2019). The public image of Nigeria police is practically battered because of extra judicial killings, abuse of human rights, extortion and bribery, neglect of official duties and nonchalant attitude towards the public (Charles & Wadume, 2019). Further, in Nigeria, the police have in, their day-to-day function of policing and law enforcement, violated the rights of Nigerians. Nonetheless, the general-public observes that there are several ways in which receiving bribery and public extortion of money batters the public image of the Nigeria Police, and the extent to which recorded extra judicial killings affects the public image of the Nigeria police (Nigeria Police Watch, April 19, 2014). This strengthens the frame that a relationship exists between abuse of human rights and public relations image of the police in Nigeria. The long neglect suffered by the Nigeria police from both military and civilian governments has led them to seek other illegitimate/unethical means of meeting societal institutionalized goals (Eleonu & Winston, 2019). This is despite the internationally gained reputation of excellent delivery duties on missions outside the shore Nigeria.

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is constitutionally mandated to maintain law and order, protect lives and property, and ensure internal security across the country. As one of the most visible public institutions in Nigeria, the image and reputation of the Police play a critical role in shaping public trust, cooperation, and compliance with the law. However, over the years, the Nigeria Police Force has been confronted with persistent image challenges arising from allegations of corruption, abuse of power, human rights violations, extortion, and unprofessional conduct. These challenges have negatively influenced public perception and weakened police–community relations in many parts of the country (Ukaegbu, Maciver, & Awajiowa, 2024).

Public perception of the Nigeria Police has been shaped largely by citizens' direct encounters with officers as well as mediated experiences through traditional and digital media. Scholarly evidence indicates that repeated reports of police misconduct and brutality have contributed to widespread distrust, cynicism, and resistance towards the institution (Inobemhe, Garba, Santas, & Udeh, 2023). This situation poses serious implications for effective policing, since public cooperation is essential for crime prevention, intelligence gathering, and conflict management. Consequently, the need for deliberate and sustained image management strategies has become increasingly important for the Nigeria Police Force.

Public relations, as a strategic management function, provides a framework through which organizations engage their publics, manage reputation, and foster mutual understanding. In the context of law enforcement, public relations strategies are used to improve transparency, enhance communication, manage crises, and rebuild damaged institutional images. According to Umaru, Chiakaan, and Kaigama (2025), effective public relations practices in policing include media relations, community engagement programmes, stakeholder communication, public enlightenment campaigns, and the use of digital platforms to disseminate accurate information. These strategies are intended to project a positive image of the Police and counteract negative narratives that undermine public confidence.

Statement of the Problem

There exists no iota of hesitation that the image of the Nigerian Police are adversely affected by several challenges such as inappropriate policing, orientation and strategies with importance of reactive other than proactive or preventive measures. (Eleonu & Winston, 2019). It also includes brutality against citizenry, together with extrajudicial killing, corruption and extortion, poor performance in the areas of intelligence analysis and utilization as well as investigation and perversion of the course of justice. In Nigeria, the police have in their day-to-day function of policing and law enforcement violated the rights of Nigerians. To this, Onoge (1993) positioned that the slogan "Police is your friend" in present-day Nigeria is no longer tenable as three decades after independence, the quest for social order is nothing short of a mirage. Further, it is nauseating that despite the constitutional powers granted to the police to maintain public peace, safety and general securitization in Nigeria, the quality of security is grossly short of expectation (Ekpenyong, 1987; Jike, 2003; Odekunle, 2004), which has in no small way generated a great deal of controversies.

Ajisafe & Odunayo (2017), while investigating on communication and effective policing in Nigeria narrowed their study to five divisional police headquarters in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom. Similarly, Omolola et al., (2017) studied re-engineering the reactive public relations practice of the Nigerian police for National security and narrowed her study to Lagos State police command. While employing the use of desktop methodology on police image in Nigeria: matters arising and challenges, Eleonu & Winston (2020), though related to this study, had no study area/population. And Eleonu & Winston (2019) examined image of police in Nigeria: an introduction focused her study on the general public. Despite this responsibility, the image of the Nigeria Police Force has been persistently undermined by

allegations of corruption, abuse of power, human rights violations, and unprofessional conduct. These issues have contributed significantly to negative public perceptions and declining trust in the institution, thereby affecting effective policing and citizen cooperation (Ukaegbu, Maciver, & Awajiowa, 2024).

In response to these challenges, the Nigeria Police Force has adopted various public relations strategies aimed at managing its image and rebuilding public confidence. Such strategies include media relations, public enlightenment campaigns, community engagement initiatives, stakeholder communication, and the use of digital and social media platforms. However, empirical studies indicate that despite the adoption of these strategies, public perception of the Nigeria Police Force remains largely negative, suggesting gaps in the effectiveness and consistency of these image management efforts (Umaru, Chiakaan, & Kaigama, 2025). It is against this premise that this study is conducted.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess public relations and image management of the Nigerian Police Force. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the significance of the public relations strategies adopted by the Nigerian police force in its image management

2. Ascertain impacts of public relations strategies adopted by the Nigerian police force on its public image

3. Find out the relationship between the media and public relations strategies of the Nigerian police force in reducing bad publicity.

4. Identify the impeding factors against the public relations strategies adopted in the image management of the Nigerian Police Force in reducing bad publicity

Review of Concepts

This section reviews concepts that are central to this study.

Public Relations

Public Relations is one of the most difficult concepts to define (Iringe-Koko & Wagbara, 2019). This is because of the fact that it seems so easy to understand the difficulty to explain in practical terms. In addition, several individuals including Public Relations

Department believe they possess the best knowledge of the concept and so have come up with different definitions of the concept. In fact, experts have also said that there are more than 600-recorded definitions of Public Relations in existence. This is especially so when we add to the list the other recorded and unrecorded definitions of what could be, described as commonsensical or nonsensical definitions of the concept. Among such nonsensical derogatory and ignorance-based definitions or descriptions are those that present Public Relations in different words as cover up and the Public Relations Department as those hired to tell lies for their organizations (Black, 1989). Black (1989) in reacting to the distortions in Public Relations seems to have emphasized truth and full information in his own definition of Public Relations. As he states it, "Public Relations practice is the art and science of achieving harmony with the environment through mutual understanding based on truth and information." This definition emphasizes truth and information as essential ingredients of Public Relations though it is silent and does not bring out the management orientation of modern Public Relations practice, as well as the current emphasis on the practice of effective organization at or management performance, research planning and communication as the key to success in modern Public Relations management.

Police-public relations is, described as a managerial function of a scheduled and, continuing character whereby the police as a public institution seek ways to win (Chukwuma, 2008). This encompasses retaining the understanding, compassion, support and, co-operation of members of the public both as individuals and, a collectivity in the direction of operative discharge of their constitutional responsibilities as a crime deterrence and, fighting outfit in society.

Review of Related Literature.

Significance of the public relations strategies adopted by the Nigerian police force in its image management

Public relations is widely recognised as a strategic management function that facilitates mutual understanding and beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics. In contemporary public sector administration, public relations plays a critical role in shaping institutional legitimacy, credibility, and reputation. In Nigeria, scholarly examinations of public relations practice reveal that the discipline has evolved from a publicity-driven function to a more strategic process that emphasises relationship management, dialogue, and reputation

building, particularly within public institutions such as the Nigeria Police Force (Akintola, Omipidan, & Ifeduba, 2026). These perspectives underscore the relevance of public relations as a tool for managing public perceptions and institutional image in contexts characterised by public distrust and accountability concerns.

The Nigeria Police Force has for decades grappled with significant image challenges arising from public perceptions of corruption, brutality, abuse of power, and inefficiency. Empirical studies indicate that frequent allegations of extortion, unlawful detention, excessive use of force, and human rights violations have severely eroded public confidence in the police as an institution (Ukaegbu, Maciver, & Awajiowa, 2024). These persistent negative perceptions have positioned image management as a strategic necessity rather than an optional function, compelling the Nigeria Police Force to adopt public relations strategies aimed at restoring trust and improving its standing among citizens.

Public relations strategies adopted by the Nigeria Police Force are largely designed to correct negative narratives, promote institutional reforms, and foster positive engagement with the public. Research shows that these strategies include media relations activities such as press briefings, press releases, public enlightenment campaigns, stakeholder engagement forums, and community outreach programmes (Umaru, Chiakaan, & Kaigama, 2025). Through these channels, the police seek to communicate their statutory roles, highlight operational achievements, and project an image of professionalism and service orientation. The literature suggests that such strategies are significant in shaping how citizens interpret police actions and organisational intent.

Impacts of public relations strategies adopted by the Nigerian police force on its public image

Public relations strategies are conceptualised as deliberate communication actions designed to influence public perception, build relationships, and manage institutional reputation. In public sector organisations such as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), public relations is especially consequential because policing legitimacy depends heavily on public trust and confidence in law enforcement effectiveness and accountability. Scholarly discourse positions public relations as central to organisational image construction and maintenance, emphasising proactive communication, stakeholder engagement, and media relations as essential mechanisms for reputation management in contexts of social scrutiny (Ukaegbu, Maciver, & Awajiowa, 2024).

The NPF has long faced challenges in its public image, partly due to allegations of corruption, excessive use of force, and limited transparency in operations. These negative perceptions have prompted internal and external calls for improved communication and image rehabilitation. Empirical studies on police public relations reveal that negative public sentiment arises not only from actual misconduct but from perceptions of detachment between police actions and community expectations, leading to deep-seated mistrust (Dapiya & Obateru, 2025). This literature signals that PR strategies intended to repair reputation must contend with long-standing institutional credibility deficits exacerbated by periodic crises such as the #EndSARS protests.

Public relations strategies adopted by the NPF include press releases, press conferences, stakeholder meetings, media and community engagement, and telephone contact channels intended to facilitate citizen-police communication. Research from the Rivers State Police Command indicates that such techniques have been used in efforts to reposition the police image and counteract negative narratives, with findings suggesting these strategies have had some positive effects on public awareness and perception of police reforms (Ukaegbu et al., 2024). These activities are designed to demonstrate responsiveness, transparency, and a commitment to ethical policing, thereby contributing to a more favourable public image when executed effectively.

Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on "Open Systems Model of Public Relations" to provide theoretical underpinning.

Open Systems Model of Public Relations

The Open Systems Model of Public Relations provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of public relations within organizations and their environments. Developed by James Grunig and Todd Hunt, this theoretical model views organizations as complex systems interacting with their external environments. It emphasizes the importance of communication and adaptation in maintaining organizational effectiveness and fostering mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. This theoretical review explores concepts, distinct advantages, critiques and applications of the Open Systems Model in the context of public relations practice.

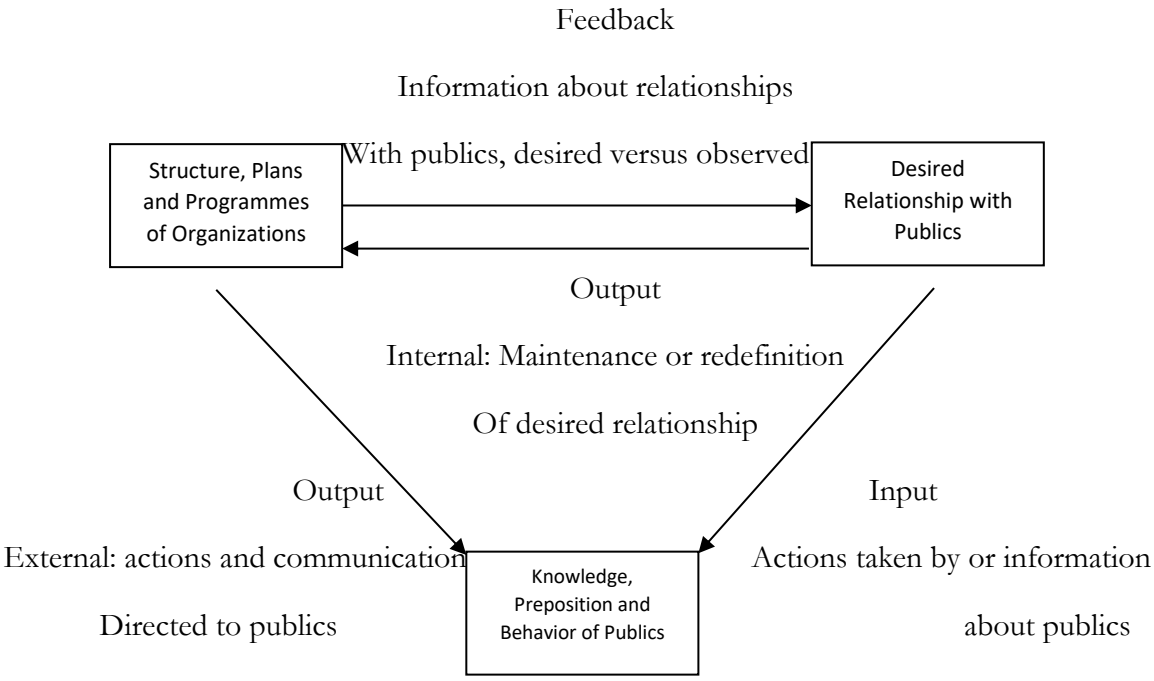


Figure 2: Open systems model of public relations. Source: Cutlip, Scott M., Center, Allen H., Broom, Glen M., Effective Public Relations, 8th Edition, © 2000, p. 244. Adapted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.)

Open systems are systems that take, their environment into account and change their business activities accordingly. Closed systems do not adapt to external conditions. Public Relation (PR) should view itself as part of an open system. It should help the organization to monitor relevant environmental influences and adapt its activities accordingly, as well as encouraging changes in the external environment that will help the organization. In this model, two-way symmetric communications and strategic monitoring of the environment are fundamental to good PR practice. This approach has distinct advantages for practitioners:

■ It positions them as strategic advisors to the organization and therefore gives them access to senior managers and more power to influence organizational activities.

■ It limits the potential for crises, since environmental scanning allows the practitioner to anticipate difficulties and take early corrective action.

■ It also ensures that PR makes a significant contribution to organizational effectiveness.

Critiques:

i. **Complexity and Dynamics:** Critics argue that the Open Systems Model may oversimplify the complexity of organizational environments and fail to capture the dynamic nature of stakeholder relationships and communication processes.

ii. **Power Imbalances and Ethics:** Scholars highlight the need to address power imbalances and ethical considerations inherent in organizational communication, ensuring transparency, accountability, and equitable stakeholder engagement.

Application to the study:

The application of the Open Systems Model of Public Relations to the assessment of public relations strategies adopted by the Nigeria Police in its image management involves:

i. **Environmental Analysis:** Examining the external factors influencing the Nigeria Police's image, including media coverage, public perceptions of law enforcement, government policies, and societal expectations.

ii. **Internal Processes:** Analyzing the communication strategies and tactics employed by the Nigeria Police to shape public perceptions, manage crises, and promote positive interactions with stakeholders.

iii. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Assessing the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police's engagement with key stakeholders, such as the media, community groups, government agencies, and the public, in building trust and credibility.

iv. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Evaluating the feedback mechanisms utilized by the Nigeria Police to monitor public opinion, gather insights, and adapt their public relations strategies to changing circumstances.

The application of the Open Systems Model of Public Relations to the assessment of public relations strategies adopted by the Nigeria Police provides a systematic framework for understanding the Force's interactions with its environment and stakeholders. By examining inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback loops, the research will gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of the police force's image management efforts and identify opportunities for improvement in communication and relationship-building practices.

Research Design

The research design adopted in the study is descriptive survey method. The research population of this study comprises staff of the public relations of the Nigerian police force, Abuja Headquarters domiciled in the public relations department. The population of this study is the 50 personnel of the Nigerian Police Force working in the public relations department of Nigerian Police Force headquartered, Abuja. Census sampling technique was

used considering the small population involved so as to give opportunity to all members of the population. Here, the researcher employs the use of structured questionnaire comprising of biodata and thematic information designed in two sections of predominantly close ended questions. Scientific Tables were used to present data in order to give a graphical trend. The data collected were analysed thematically in line with the objectives of the study.

Table 1: Showing how Public Relations was useful as a Major Relationship Tool for Feedback to the Nigeria Police Force.

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	**15**	**31.2%**
Agree	20	41.7%
Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree	5 6 2	10.4% 12.5% 4.2%
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Study, 2024

Data on table 1 above shows how Public Relations was useful as a Major Relationship tool for feedback to the Nigeria Police Force. The implication of the data is that majority of the respondents agree that, Public Relations was useful as a Major Relationship tool for feedback to the Nigeria Police Force as shown by 20 (41.7%) of the entire respondents.

Table 2: Showing the Significant Relationship that Public Relations Strategies has on the Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force.

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	**8**	**16.7%**
Above Average	9	18.8%
Average Below Average Very Low	23 5 3	47.9% 10.4% 6.2%
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Study, 2024

Data on table 2 above shows the Significant Relationship that Public Relations Strategies has on the Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force. The implication of the data is that majority of the respondents said that Significant Relationship that Public Relations Strategies has on the Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force as shown by 23 (47.9%) of the entire respondents.

Table 3: Showing Impact of Public Relations Strategy on Public Image Improvement of the Nigeria Police Force.

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	**12**	**25.1%**
Agree	25	52.1%
Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree	4 3 4	8.3% 6.2% 8.3%
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Study, 2024

Data on table 4.4 above shows Impact of Public Relations Strategy on Public Image Improvement of the Nigeria Police Force. The implication of the data is that majority of the respondents agree that, Impact of Public Relations Strategy on Public Image Improvement of the Nigeria Police Force as shown by 25 (52.1%) of the entire respondents.

Table 4: Showing Positive Relationship Between Improved Media Relations Practices and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force in Reducing Bad Publicity.

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	**26**	**54.1%**
Agree.	9	18.8%
Neither Agree or Disagree. Disagree. Strongly Disagree	6 3 4	12.5% 6.2% 8.4%
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Study, 2024

Data on table 4 above shows Positive Relationship Between Improved Media Relations Practices and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force in Reducing Bad Publicity. The implication of the data is that majority of the respondents agree that, Positive Relationship Between Improved Media Relations Practices and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force in Reducing Bad Publicity as shown by 26 (54.1%) of the entire respondents.

Table 5: Showing Impeding Factors Against the Public Relations Strategies Adopted.

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	**7**	**14.6%**
Agree.	13	27.1%

Response option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree.	**7**	**14.6%**
Neither Agree or Disagree.	18	37.6%
Disagree.	8	16.7%
Strongly Disagree	2	4.0%
Total	48	100%

Source: Field Study, 2024

Data on table 5 above shows Impeding Factors Against the Public Relations Strategies Adopted. The implication of the data is that majority of the respondents Neither Agree or Disagree that, there are Impeding Factors Against the Public Relations Strategies Adopted by the Nigeria Police Force in Reducing Bad Publicity and Positive Relationship Between Improved Media Relations Practices and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force as shown by 18 (37.6%) of the entire respondents.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: "Is there any significant relationship between public relations strategies and image management of the Nigerian police force?" The analysed survey data represented in Table 4.2 provides answer to this question.

The high percentage (64.6%) of respondents affirming the significant relationship between public relations and image management, suggests a prevailing perception that effective public relations play a crucial role in shaping and managing the image of the Nigeria Police Force. Meanwhile the presence of 27.1% respondents indicating "No" suggests that there are differing opinions within the surveyed population regarding the extent to which public relations contribute to image management. But with the presence of indifferent responses indicates that a small portion of the surveyed population (8.3%) neither strongly agrees nor disagrees with the idea of a significant relationship between public relations and image management. The prevailing perception of a significant relationship between public relations and image management highlights the importance of a well-crafted public relations strategy for the Nigeria Police Force to positively influence its public image.

However, the survey analysis indicates a substantial perception among respondents that public relations have a significant relationship with the image management of the Nigeria Police Force. Researchers and stakeholders should consider this perception when interpreting

and applying the survey results, recognizing the potential impact of effective public relations on shaping and maintaining a positive image for the police force.

This finding agrees with Charles and Madume (2020) that the issue of police image has generated interests in the Nigerian nation and beyond today. It also agrees with Madubuike-Ekwe and Obayemi (2019) where they blamed the use of discretion instead of PR strategies as a major challenge affecting the image of the police.

Umaru, Chiakaan, and Kaigama, (2025) opined that the strategies used by the Nigeria Police Force include media relations activities such as press briefings, press releases, public enlightenment campaigns, stakeholder engagement forums, and community outreach programmes. Through these channels, the police seek to communicate their statutory roles, highlight operational achievements, and project an image of professionalism and service orientation. The study averred that these strategies are significant in shaping how citizens interpret police actions and organisational intent. Invariably, it could be inferred from the findings of the current study and the studies reviewed that there is a significant relationship between the between public relations strategies and image management of the Nigerian police force.

Research Question Two: "To what extent is the impact of public relations strategy on public image improvement of the Nigerian Police Force?" The analysed survey data represented in Table 9 and Figure 9, provides answer to this question. With the majority percentage (62.5%) of respondents acknowledging the significant impact of public relations strategies, this suggests a prevailing perception that well-implemented strategies play a crucial role in enhancing the public image of the Nigeria Police Force. But, the presence of (18.8%) respondents indicating "No" suggests that there are differing opinions within the surveyed population regarding the effectiveness of public relations strategies in improving public image. However, the presence of (18.8%) indifferent responses indicates that a portion of the surveyed population neither strongly agrees nor disagrees with the idea of a significant impact of public relations strategies on public image improvement.

This prevailing perception of a significant impact emphasizes the importance of developing and implementing effective public relations strategies to positively influence the public image of the Nigeria Police Force. In overall, the survey results indicate a substantial perception among respondents that public relations strategies have a significant impact on public image improvement for the Nigeria Police Force. It is therefore important to consider

this perception when interpreting and applying the survey results, recognizing the potential influence of well-crafted strategies on enhancing the public image.

This was in contradiction to the view of Ogunlowo (2021) where he stated that Police performance is a PR strategy and Nigeria Police Force lack the requisite skill for this. Meanwhile, the study agrees with Ibikunle & Ibitoye (2020), that poor communication problem has greatly impacted the performance of the Police Force in Nigeria.

Dapiya and Obateru, (2025) reveal that while public relations initiatives have improved awareness of police reforms, they have not substantially transformed entrenched negative attitudes toward the police. This indicates that public relations strategies may be undermined by inconsistencies between communicated messages and the lived experiences of citizens. Consequently, the significance of public relations in image management is closely tied to the extent to which communication aligns with actual institutional behaviour. It is apposite to state that the public relation strategies used by the Nigeria Police is are impactful but the impact is being undermined by the attitude of the officers in reality.

Research Question three: "Does improved media relations have any significant positive relationship between practice and image management of the Nigerian Police Force in reducing bad publicity?" The analysed survey data represented in the study provides answer to this question. The high percentage of respondents acknowledging a positive relationship between improved media relations practices and image management suggests a prevailing perception that effective media relations can contribute to mitigating bad publicity. The presence of respondents indicating "No" suggests that there are differing opinions within the surveyed population regarding the impact of improved media relations on reducing bad publicity. The presence of indifferent responses indicates that a portion of the surveyed population neither agrees nor disagrees with the idea of a significant positive relationship between improved media relations and image management.

This implies that the prevailing perception of a positive relationship emphasizes the importance of fostering improved media relations practices as a strategy for reducing bad publicity and managing the image of the Nigeria Police Force.

This is in partial agreement with Odunlami and Odigie (2024) who stated that the relationship between the media and the public relations (PR) strategies of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) plays a significant but complex role in managing the Force's image, often struggling to mitigate widespread bad publicity stemming from allegations of misconduct,

brutality, and corruption. While the NPF utilizes PR efforts—including social media engagement, press conferences, and community policing initiatives—to foster public trust, these strategies often face limitations in counteracting deeply rooted negative perceptions.

On the other hand, Inobemhe et al., (2023) averred that if there were improved media relations on the image of the Police, the EndSARS would not have existed in the first instance. It was also in contradiction with the comparism of Henry e tal (2021) where noted that private organizations deploy PR strategies than government agencies, using First Bank as study.

Ukaegbu, Maciver and Awajiowa (2024) stated that Public relations practice is fundamentally concerned with shaping and maintaining organisational image, and when intertwined with media operations, it offers a powerful mechanism for police institutions to influence public opinion, communicate achievements, and clarify organisational policies in times of scrutiny. Evidence from study suggests that this relationship is critical in contexts where law enforcement faces reputational crises and requires concerted communication efforts to mitigate negative perceptions and rebuild trust.

Research question four: "are there any impeding factors against the public relations strategies adopted?" The analysed survey data represented in Table 11 and Figure 11, provides answer to this question. The majority percentage (43.8%) of respondents acknowledging impediments suggests a prevailing perception that there are challenges or obstacles hindering the effectiveness of public relations strategies within the Nigeria Police Force. However, the presence of relative 35.4% respondents indicating "No" reveals that there is a portion of the surveyed population with an optimistic view, believing that there are no significant impediments against the adopted public relations strategies. Meanwhile, the presence of 20.8% few indifferent responses indicates that a portion of the surveyed population neither agrees nor disagrees with the idea of impediments against the adopted public relations strategies. This implies that the acknowledgment of impediments highlights the need for a strategic approach in identifying and addressing the challenges to enhance the effectiveness of public relations strategies.

This agrees with study of Ikenna (2023) where he revealed that, the public relations practice of the Nigerian police force has negatively affected her relationship with the public, indicating that there is no effective PR strategies. Similarly, in agreement with Inobemhe et al.,

(2023), posit that the EndSARS exposed the poor PR strategies of the police presented, contributing to extended periods of bad publicity.

In the same vein, Ukaegbu et al., (2024) said that entrenched unethical practices and misconduct among police officers present another formidable barrier to the effectiveness of public relations strategies in image management. Studies have shown that unethical behaviours, such as extortion, brutality, and unlawful arrests, indicates that such actions undermine any communication strategy aimed at improving the police's reputation. When misconduct persists and is widely reported in the media, it reinforces public distrust and scepticism, making it harder for PR messages to succeed in changing negative perceptions. Thus, without substantive behavioural reforms within the police, image management strategies are compromised.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings underscore the significance of public relations strategies in shaping and managing the image of the Nigeria Police Force. The majority of respondents affirm a significant relationship between public relations and image management, emphasizing the importance of a well-crafted public relations strategy. Moreover, there is a prevailing perception of the substantial impact of these strategies on improving the public image of the police force, highlighting the need for their effective implementation. The study also reveals a positive relationship between improved media relations practices and image management, indicating that fostering such practices can contribute to mitigating bad publicity. However, impediments to the effectiveness of public relations strategies are acknowledged by a majority of respondents, suggesting the existence of challenges that require strategic solutions for enhancement. In light of these findings, researchers and stakeholders should consider the identified perceptions when interpreting and applying the survey results. Recognizing the potential influence of well-implemented public relations strategies, improved media relations practices, and addressing impediments becomes crucial for positively shaping the public image of the Nigeria Police Force.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following are therefore recommended:

1.The Nigeria Police Force should invest in crafting and implementing robust public relations strategies. This involves continuous training and development programs for PR personnel to ensure they are well-equipped to positively influence the public perception of the force.

2.The NPF should recognize the prevailing perception of a substantial impact as it is crucial for researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to underscore the importance of well-implemented public relations strategies. This emphasis should be incorporated into policies and practices to leverage the positive influence of PR strategies on enhancing the public image of the Nigeria Police Force.

3. Considering the positive relationship between improved media relations practices and image management, there should be a deliberate focus on fostering effective media relations. Training programs and resources should be allocated to enhance the skills of police personnel in engaging with the media positively.

4. Acknowledging the perceived impediments to public relations strategies, there is a need for a strategic approach to identify and address these challenges. The Nigeria Police Force should conduct a comprehensive review of existing PR strategies, considering feedback from stakeholders, to identify and mitigate obstacles.

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