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Assessment of Regulatory Policy for Public Relations Practice in Nigeria

Maha Jude Ikemefuna, Anthony I. Igyuve, Anthony Ogande
Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria
judemaha2013@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study examines the regulatory policy governing Public Relations (PR) practice in Nigeria, with a focus on its effectiveness in promoting ethical standards and professionalism. Adopting a survey research design, the study is anchored on the Excellence Theory and the Synergistic Communication for Development (SCD) model, which together emphasize strategic communication and collaborative development approaches. A sample of 333 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula, and data were collected using structured questionnaires. Findings reveal that a majority of respondents believe the application of regulatory policies in PR practice encourages adherence to global standards and discourages ethical violations. Furthermore, the implementation of these policies has contributed to a reduction in unprofessional practices, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of regulatory frameworks in the Nigerian PR industry. The study concludes that regulatory policies are largely effective in promoting professionalism in PR practice. It recommends, among other measures, that regulatory bodies streamline administrative registration processes to encourage wider enrollment and compliance, ultimately fostering a more ethical and standardized PR profession in Nigeria.

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Keywords: Assessment; Ethics; Public Relations; Regulatory Policies; Professionalism

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations is an important element in both public and private establishments, it is an amalgamation of specialized skills and professions that utilizes a number of approaches and philosophies. Public Relations is not new, rather, with the development of new technologies, new ways of communication and changing public opinion, it is becoming increasingly important in all societies. The increasing demand for Public Relations practitioners necessitated employers of labour to resort to employing people from allied disciplines such as Journalism, Marketing and other fields. But because of the technicalities involved in the practice, it cannot be left without appropriate checks in place to monitor practitioners so as to maintain standard.

According to Abodunrin (2011) a practitioner should respect public interest and the dignity of the individual. Osho (2001) in Udomiso (2013) is of the view that although there are no statistical data, it is obvious that non-professionals exist in the practice of the profession in Nigeria. This stems from the fact that nonprofessionals lack knowledge, and experience in peculiar practice tradition, relative relational intricacies, legal requirements and circumstances as well as lack of knowledge of the terrain they are operating which is likely to result in lack of contact facilitation procedure. This buttresses the primacy of having trained public relations' experts who are conversant with the rules, ethics and policies that guide the practice.

In furtherance to that, Keghku(2013) opined that, no profession can succeed until backed by a code of ethics, and the public relations profession is no exception. Ethics, policies and other guiding principles are indispensable and integral part of every profession the world over. The words 'ethics' means a system of moral principles governing the appropriate conducts of a person or a group. It includes many components, one of which is behaviour. It implies behaviour, personal or organizational, which must comply with certain standards. In addition to ethics, policies are also central to the practice of public relations as they define the dos and don'ts of public relations practice. Policy is a philosophy of operation and represents the general image the organisation has to make for

itself before the publics, with the available information and date. Oyeneye (2006) posits that policy is a guideline of actions. The public relations policy gives the public relations department a sense of focus and direction. It assists to channel the efforts of the department towards a predetermined direction and leads to the achievement of goals, objectives, purpose and mission of the organisation.

This perhaps explains why Ubani (1996) cited in Asemah (2022) says that "policies are written statements, sentences or understandings which guide management and employee's actions in achieving a certain goal in an organisation. However, due to the flexibility and interactive nature of some of these platforms, it allows the public relations professionals to receive immediate feedback thereby making it easy to determine the perception of the public on the reputation of the organization. So, Akintaro and Ekhareafo (2017) warn that stories from such secondary sources have the highest chance of triggering organizational crises and when it is not well managed, it could lead to creating a negative reputation for such organizations in the eyes of the public. Hence, in that instance, there is a need to deploy appropriate public relations strategies to nip the crisis in the bud in other to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the publics. This was what necessitates the establishment of institutions and regulatory bodies saddled with the responsibility of overseeing public relations activities at different levels.

It is against these backdrops that this work therefore, critically seeks to assess the regulatory institutions and policies for public relations practice in Nigeria, especially Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) and further recommended ways of improving the regulation of the practice.

Statement of the Problem

There are various provisions, Decrees and bye-laws carefully drafted and crafted by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) which enshrined in them are operational instructions and guidelines that oversees the conduct and affairs of these organizations. Despite the existence of these legal provisions, plethora of problems persist. Lazarus (2021) substantiate that professional bodies such as Nigerian Institute of Public Relations are bedeviled with challenges that affects their effectiveness. These problems range from unethical conducts, lack of adequate awareness on the code of the profession and the functions of the Institute among others.

Udesor (2018) added that these problems most often than not jettisoned practitioners' effectiveness and adherence to the codes and conduct of guiding those agencies because of their inactive and negligible behaviors. It is apposite to note that these revelations surrounding professional practitioners of these institution makes it almost impossible for an effective mass reaction or favorable perception of public relations messages when they hear or see it and if public relations messages make people change their views about issues positively or negatively. Currently, compliance with the code of conduct of most public relations institute/societies is 'voluntary' and 'policing' of public relations around the world is limited to self-regulation, reprimands and sanctions internally (Skinner, Mersham & Valim, 2003 p. 23).The infiltration of non-professionals and the proliferation of sharp practices and unethical behaviours in public relations practice bring to mind the question of whether or not there exist public relations institutions and regulatory bodies in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the regulatory policies of Public Relations practice in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to assess PR regulatory Institutions and its policies for public relations practice in Nigeria and recommend ways that will enhance a proper and better regulation of the practice.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the Regulatory policies for regulating Public Relations practice in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the level of enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria.
3. To examine the effectiveness of the regulatory policies for Public Relations practice in Nigeria.

Review of Concepts

Major concepts that constitute the study have been reviewed to provide a better understanding of the current research.

The Concept of Public Relations

Public relations is a management tool that is increasingly becoming important in the management of organization, whether they are profit making or nonprofit oriented. It is an essential element in the communication system that enables individuals to be

informed on many aspects of subjects that affects their lives. According to Chair (1996), the term public relation connotes, information given to the public, persuasion directed to modify attitudes and actions efforts to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its public and of publics with that institution. Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics (Asemah et al., 2022). Public relation is an activity geared towards human relationship to enhance good services.

Jefkins (1990), im Asemah (2022) posits that ―public relation consist of all forms of planned communication, outward and inward, between an organization and it‘s publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understandings‖. The institute of Public Relations London defines public relations, according to institute of public relation is ―the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its public.

Review of Related Literature

It is imperative to review related literature in order to provide strong literature background fir the current study.

The Regulatory Policy for Regulating Public Relations Practice in Nigeria

A public relations professional does not live or practice in an isolated world; whatever he does affects his clients and the society in general. Again, due to human tendency to take actions to the extreme in a bid to satisfy him or herself sometimes, at the expense of others, there must be instruments to regulate and control human activities. Public relations practitioners deal with various legal issues in the bid to build and maintain mutual relationship between an organisation and its publics (Asemah, Akase and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2023). One of the commonest legal issues PR deals with is defamation.

Defamation has to do with written publication or spoken statement that is untrue and has the tendency to tarnish someone's reputation. It is a negative language about a person that harms him by hurting his reputation, causing monetary loss or mental anguish. Public relations activities can attract defamation if advertisements or press releases place blame on another person in order to protect a company or seek to deflect blame by speaking negatively about someone else. Businesses can avoid these troubles by simply not

speaking negatively of the competition or by at least making sure that opinions are clearly labelled as such or that statements of fact are definitively backed up (Dwilson, 2016). This is often referred to as defences against defamation where what the person said is true and or does not inflict any harm, damage one's reputation or cause any loss of money. Defamation is a public act or statement that deliberately harms people and their reputations; a public relations person who uses words, photographs, graphics or symbols that defame someone could be sued for libel; if the PR person works for you, your company could be liable, as well (Bolden-Barrett, 2016). When the act of defamation is written it is referred to as libel and when it is spoken it is referred to as slander. Defamation, then, is defined as harmful, negative language that disparages an individual (rather than a group). According to Asemah (2022), defamation is defined as any statement spoken or written that attempts to harm a person's reputation in the eyes of the society's rational citizens. Such a statement or publication makes such an individual to be shunned or avoided.

If a public relations organisation issues news releases, house journals, annual reports that are short of adequate truth, a court could summon them if a suit has been instituted against the organisation for libel. Libel is a written communication that has defamatory content against a person, community, religion and organisation and it is actionable per se. It is created visually and is permanent. Photographs, illustrations, cartoons, books, newspapers, magazines, videotape, artwork, effigies, movies, radio, notes, and TV shows can all constitute libel. It is possible to defame someone in a caption as well as an image. A picture or a caption can be considered defamatory if it instigates hate, mockery, or contempt; lowers their status from someone against rational community members; makes them feel ostracized or avoided; or damages their reputation in their industry, business, or place of employment. This implies that, as a public relations professional, you have to exercise caution when captioning photos that you use in your publications.

Slander is simply a kind of defamation which is described as defamatory statement addressed to the ears. It is the kind of defamation that is committed through spoken words or gestures. This means that slander is the form of defamation that is committed verbally. It is defamation in transitory form. Slander is not a commonly violated public relations law. This is probably because the bulk of public relations messages today appear in written forms. The truth, however, is that very many public relations jobs involve speech broadcast

and oral presentations. Thus, there is need to examine the law of slander else, it can be unconsciously violated. The implication of this on a practitioner is that he must ensure that every oral communication is properly examined and devoid of any slanderous statement.

An area of law that public relations personnel in any business must be particularly sensitive to is the issue of privacy. Privacy has to do with an individual's right to personal life and information. It is also the right to be left alone. This encompasses employee communication, photo releases, product publicity and advertising and media inquiries about employees (Hatt, 2016). The public relations personnel must ensure that the public's right to know should not infringe on the individuals' right to their privacy.

Copyright law is the law that protects individual's right to their intellectual property against intellectual theft. This is an intellectual property that public relations practitioners must be mindful of. Copyright is the protection of any creative work that is fixed in a tangible medium; for example, any brochures or other public relations material that you create will be automatically copyrighted, however, copyright law applies to only registered intellectual properties (Dwilson, 2013). Practitioners of public relations need to exercise caution to prevent violating copyright laws. In addition to ensuring that other organizations' copyrights are not misused, public relations professionals are tasked with keeping an eye on the media to make sure their own organization is not being violated. However, copyrighted materials may be used under the Fair Use Doctrine as long as they are credited to the original owner and are used for teaching and research, criticism, or news reporting.

Theoretical Framework

Responsible advocacy theory of Public Relations was selected to serve as the theoretical underpinning for this study.

Responsible Advocacy Theory of Public Relations

Responsible advocacy has been seen as a theory of ethics that could be applied to the practice of public relations. The theory was developed by communication scholars Kathy Fitzpatrick and Candace Gauthier in 2001 (Cox, 2006). Responsible advocacy seeks to marry the ethical identity of public relations professional as advocate and social conscience, two roles that have consistently been at odds with each other. As an advocate, a public relations professional is accountable to his or her client or organisation. As a social conscience, however, a public relations professional is accountable to the public at large;

thus, the innate conflict between the two identities (Cox, 2006).

The theory of responsible advocacy attempts acts as a guidance. Specifically, there are three principles that must be adhered to. First, a public relations professional must carefully consider the harms and benefits of possible action. Second, respect for all persons should be insured. Third, a public relations professional must see that all rewards and difficulties be equally allocated. These principles are the basis for the responsible advocacy theory. Admittedly, the principles can conflict and therefore responsible advocacy must employ the personal ethics of a practitioner (Culled from Cox, 2006). This implies that the best way to practise public relations ethics is through the ideal of professional responsibility; thus, it lays emphasis on the need for public relations practitioners to serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those they represent. The key points of this theory of ethics are: practitioners' greatest need for ethical guidance is in the reconciling of their conflicting roles of professional advocate and social conscience; public relations professionals best serve society by serving the special interests of their clients or employers and first loyalty is always to client, but also have a responsibility to voice the opinions of organisational stakeholders.

The theory of responsible advocacy in public relations aligns well with the assessment of regulatory policies for public relations practice in Nigeria. Given the unique challenges and ethical dilemmas often faced by public relations professionals in Nigeria, this theory offers a valuable framework for evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of regulatory policies in the field. By emphasizing the need to reconcile the roles of professional advocate and social conscience, it highlights the importance of ethical considerations in PR practice. The three principles of careful consideration of harms and benefits, respect for all persons, and equitable allocation of rewards and difficulties provide a solid foundation for assessing whether regulatory policies adequately address ethical concerns and promote responsible advocacy in the Nigerian context. Moreover, recognizing the primary loyalty to clients while also acknowledging a responsibility to voice the opinions of organizational stakeholders is crucial for evaluating the balance between serving special interests and the broader public interest in the regulatory framework.

METHODS

Survey research is a systematic set of methods used to gather information to generate knowledge and to help make decisions. This design therefore will help the researcher to assess the regulatory policies for public relations practice in Nigeria. The population for this is all members and officials of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) in the federal capital territory Abuja. The population of the members and staff of Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) Abuja chapter and the National Headquarters is 2004(NIPR Abuja, 2023).

The sample of this research is calculated by using Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1967) formula with 95% confidence level and 0.5 margin error in order to avoid sampling error. The calculation formula of Taro Yamane is presented as follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

Where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%)

Substitute numbers in formula:

$$n=\frac{2004}{(1+2004(0.05)2)}$$

$$n = \frac{2004}{(1 + 2004(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2004}{(1 + 5.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{2004}{6.01}$$

$$\frac{2004}{(1 + 2004(0.05)2)}$$

$$n = 333.44$$

$$n = 333$$

After calculating the sample size by substituting the numbers into the Yamane formula, the numbers of sample was333.44 persons. In order to obtain reliable data,

researcher has approximated the sample size to 333 persons

RESULTS

The researcher administered 333 copies of the instrument to respondents. However, only 330 copies were completed and returned useable. The presentation and analysis is based on the data obtained from the questionnaire administered from the field work through the instrument of questionnaire. Below is a tabular presentation of the data obtained

Table 1: Showing status of registration with Public Relations Professional body for ethical practiced.

S/N	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Yes	210	63.3
2	No	120	36.7
	Total	**330**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data on table 1 above shows the respondents status of registration with Public Relations Professional body for ethical practiced. The implication of the data in the table above is that the majority of the respondents have registered with Public Relations Professional body for ethical practiced.

Table 2: Showing Nigeria Institute of Public Relation (NIPR)Registered Practitioners Statistics.

S/N	Options	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Yes	223	67.6
2	No	107	32.4
	Total	**330**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data on table 2 above shows Nigeria Institute of Public Relation (NIPR)Registered Practitioners Statistics. The implication of the data in the table above is that majority of the respondents are registered Practitioner with the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR)as shown by 223 respondents represented by (67.6%) of the entire population.

Table 3: Showing Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) as Regulating Authority for Public Relations in Nigeria

S/N	Options	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Strongly Agree	76	23.0
2	Agree	105	31.8
3	Neutral	9	2.7
4	Disagree	98	29.6
5	Strongly Disagree	42	12.7
	Total	**330**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data on table 3 above shows Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) as Regulating Authority for Public Relations in Nigeria. The implication of the data in the table above is that a good number of respondents agreed that Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) is the regulating authority for public relations in Nigeria, as shown by105 respondents representing (31.8%) of the entire population.

Table 4 Showing how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is Effective.

S/N	Options	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Strongly Agree	97	29.3
2	Agree	101	30.6
3	Neutral	18	5.4
4	Disagree	36	10.9
5	Strongly Disagree	78	23.6
	Total	**330**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data on table 4 above shows how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is Effective.The implication of the data in the table above is that a good number of respondents agreed that the Enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is effective, as shown by101 respondents representing (30.6%) of the entire population.

Table 5: Showing how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is Necessary

S/N	Options	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Strongly Agree	105	31.8
2	Agree	84	24.5
3	Neutral	17	5.1
4	Disagree	64	13.3
5	Strongly Disagree	60	18.1
	Total	**330**	**100**

Data on table 5 above shows how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is Necessary. The implication of the data in the table above is that a good number of respondents strongly agreed that the Enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is necessary, as shown by 105 respondents representing (31.8%) of the entire population.

Table 6: Showing how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is in line with Global best Practices

S/N	Options	Frequency	Percentages [%]
1	Strongly Agree	134	40.6
2	Agree	55	16.6
3	Neutral	21	6.3
4	Disagree	98	29.6
5	Strongly Disagree	22	6.6
	Total	**330**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data on table 6 above shows how Enforcement of Regulatory Policies in the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is in line with Global best Practices. The implication of the data in the table above is that a good number of respondents strongly agreed that the Enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is in line with global best practices, as shown by 134 respondents representing (40.6%) of the entire population.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were discussed thematically in line with the research questions of the study in order to answer the research questions.

What are the regulatory policies for regulating Public Relations practice in Nigeria?

This research question sought to identify the regulatory policies for regulating Public Relations practice in Nigeria. In ascertaining the practitioners' status of registration with professional bodies, findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents have registered with Public Relations Professional body for ethical practice as evident in 210 respondents who represent 63.3% of the population. The study also determined the number of practitioners that are registered with NIPR, findings indicated that majority of the respondents are registered Practitioners with the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) as shown by 223 respondents represented by (67.6%) of the entire population.

Furthermore, the study also investigated the Membership Indication Number of the practitioners, findings show that majority of the respondent have a membership practice number as shown by 201 respondents represented by (60.9%) of the entire population. In identifying the regulatory authority and policies for public relations, findings from the study revealed that a summed affirmative of 54.8% constituting an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) is the regulating authority for public relations in Nigeria. Apparently, the findings of the study show that majority of the respondents are registered with Nigeria Institute of Public Relations and do have membership identification number. The practitioners are also both aware of the Public relations regulatory bodies in Nigeria and the regulatory policies that guide the profession. This also shows that there are regulatory policies in the practice of public relations in Nigeria.

This finding corroborates the study of Udomisor and Osademe(2013) who averred that Nigeria Institute of Public Relations(NIPR) is the statutory body for Public Relations practitioners in Nigeria. The NIPR is charged with responsibility of controlling, governing or directing by rules, policies the PR practitioners to the path of professional excellence. This reason prompted the promulgation of Decree No 16 of 1990 by the Babangida regime whose aim was to uplift the standard of the profession, inject respect and probity into the practice by determining standards, skills, and knowledge to be attained.

In a related study by Owolabi (2007), he also discovered that 55% of his respondents were members of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations. This clearly indicates there is a burgeoning increase in the number of persons enrolling into the NIPR to enhance professionalism in the Public Relations Practice. Albeit, the percentage of the professionals in the profession is slightly above average, it is still worrisome to note that close to half of the percentage in both the past and current studies constitute non-professionals that have infiltrated the public relations practice and are exhibiting all forms of misdemeanor that are dragging the profession into reproach and disrepute.

What is the level of enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria?

This question aimed to ascertain the level of enforcement vis-a-vis compliance to the regulatory policies of Public Relations practice in Nigeria. Findings from the research show that a good number of respondents stated that the enforcement of regulatory policies

in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is effective and necessary as supported by 59.9% and 56.3% respectively. An overwhelming number of the respondents (57.2%) also added that the level of enforcement of Public Relations practice in Nigeria is in line with global best practices. An analysis of the findings of the current study indicates that the level of enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of public relations in Nigeria is high as evident in the affirmative responses of the practitioners. Consequently, an average population of PR practitioners in Nigeria are measuring up to global best practices and standard whereas the remaining population are still lagging behind. This reveals that more still needs to be done to improve on the level of enforcement of regulatory policies in the practice of public relations in Nigeria so as to reduce the unethical practices that are thriving unabated at the moment.

This, however, contrasts with the findings of Owolabi (2007) who found out that the level of compliance to public relations codes by practitioners in Nigeria is low and thereby appalling. He added that although, the code is endorsed by all the members of the Institute but regrettably, only few obey this code in practice. His research showed that 86% respondents said they would use every available opportunity to their advantage whether or not it is ethically right confirmed this. To most people, the first consideration is how to survive the economic hardship. Other considerations follow thereafter. It is therefore not surprising to see PR managers and directors contracting out the production of their employers PR souvenir to their privately owned companies.

Osho(2001) argued further that the code of Nigeria Institute of Public Relations is ineffective because it did not emphasize the public interest which it ought to protect. In addition to that, Udoh, a one-time National Vice-President of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations in Communication Strategies, 1999 describes the Nigerian Institute of Public Relation decree No.16 of 1990 as a mere sheet of paper and the law as a toothless bulldog being flouted with reckless abandon.

How effective are the regulatory policies for Public Relations practice in Nigeria?

This research question examined the effectiveness of the application of regulatory policies for Public Relations in Nigeria. The study revealed that a good number of respondents agreed that the application of regulatory policies for Public Relations practice in Nigeria encourages members' adherence to global standards and that it discourages violation of ethics as supported by 59.9% affirmative responses. In addition, a good

number of respondents strongly agreed that application of regulatory policies for Public Relations practice Nigeria discourages violation of ethics, as revealed by summed affirmative respondents (70.8%) of the entire population. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that application of regulatory policies for Public Relations practice in Nigeria reduces unprofessional practices thereby increasing the effectiveness of regulatory policies in Public Relations practice in Nigeria as shown by 63.9% of the respondents. This therefore suggests that the utilisation of regulatory policies for public relations practice in Nigeria is effective as it even tries to discourage violation of public relations policies and at the same tome reduce incidences of non-professional practice of public relations in Nigeria.

Be that as it may, it is apposite to note that the level of effectiveness of these PR regulatory policies differs from one environment to another as evidenced in the discrepancy from the findings of the current and the past study conducted by Necic (2021). He stated that the code of Public Relations itself means very little if it is not consistently implemented in practice. More so, codes of ethics and norms are self-regulatory bodies within the profession, so there is no adequate sanction for non-compliance. Thus, although codes of ethics and professional norms serve as evidence of the professional status of public relations, they are nevertheless voluntary in nature. Since PR is an evolving profession, it still has its shortcomings. What is also missing is the impossibility of detecting violations of ethical norms and codes, unlike journalism where violations of ethical norms and codes are more noticeable. Necic's (2021) study also shows that the level of effectiveness of regulatory policies in Public Relations practice is minimal which is contrary to the findings of this study where there was an overwhelming concession on the effectiveness of the regulatory policies in Nigeria.

The findings of the current study give credence to the Theory of Responsible Advocacy which was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The postulation of the theory is in consonance with the findings of this study in that it stated that responsible advocacy seeks to marry the ethical identity of public relations professional as advocate and social conscience, two roles that have consistently been at odds with each other.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings from the study, it is apposite to note that there are regulatory policies and authorities that regulate the practice of public relations in Nigeria. Interestingly, the study established that the level of enforcement of public relations regulatory policies in Nigeria is impressive as it is being matched with a good number of practitioners working as registered members of Nigeria Institute of Public Relations and Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria. This development has significantly contributed in the reduction of non-professionals in the practice of public relations in Nigeria and has also discouraged the violation of public relations policies and ethics. Be that as it may, there are a considerable number of public relations practitioners that are not identified with any professional body and are not even aware of public relations regulatory policies and code of ethics. These non-professionals are exhibiting all sorts of sharp practices and misdemeanor that is dragging the image of public relations to the mud as well as questioning its professionalism most especially when compared with other professions like law and medicine in Nigeria. There is therefore the need for sanitization exercise to be carried out in the Nigerian practitioners of Public Relations to check out all the non-professionals and or provide measures to train and integrate them into professional practice of public relations. This will salvage what remains of the fast-damaging image of public relations in Nigeria and at the same time confer the highly coveted status of professionalism on public relations practice. This implies that the best way to practise public relations ethics is through the ideal of professional responsibility; thus, it lays emphasis on the need for public relations practitioners to serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those they represent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered, and they are:

1. There should be more publicity, orientation and awareness bythe Nigeria Institute of Public Relations and Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria to both intending and practicing Public Relations practitioners the existence of regulatory policies and bodies that guide the profession in order to enhance standards of practice.
2. Public Relations Regulatory bodies should reduce the membership registration fee in order to encourage more enrollment of other practitioners into the professional

body for proper identification and documentation.

3. There should be clear cut punitive measures for violators by public relations regulatory bodies in order to serve as deterrent to others and to bring about sanity and sanctity in the Public Relations practice as obtainable in other professions and in line with global best practices.

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