

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE IN NASARAWA STATE AND ABUJA ADOPTED FOR REPUTATION MANAGEMENT**

**Bazza Idris Adamu, Assoc. Prof. J.S. Kente, Assoc. Prof. T.M. Akase**

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences,

Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: idibazza1@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This study evaluates how the public views the police in Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The research utilized survey method with a population size of 397 and a sample size of 397 from the police public relations departments and the police community relations committees in FCT (Abuja) and Nasarawa State using purposive sampling method to elicit response from the population. The results showed that because of the unethical behaviour of police officers and other institutional shortcomings, the public has a negative opinion of the police. It was discovered that majority 42.1% affirmed that through feature pieces and news stories in newspapers and magazines, television shows and interactions with the community through publicity, the reputation of the force has been enhanced. Inadequate training and experience, improper orientation, poor supervision of staff, poor community relations, poor media relations and publicity, and insufficient money are all problems identified. Additionally, the findings indicated that the Police Public Relations Officer must view effective public relations as a continuous process that calls for tenacity, positivity, and a constant search for chances to present the force in a favourable light and foster trust over time. Using PR principles to improve police reputation requires visible policing. Based on its findings and conclusion, this study's recommendation is that sufficient funding and attention to correcting institutional shortcomings and reputation through trainings and reorientation be advocated for enhanced public-private relations of the Nigerian police force.

**Keywords:** Communication, Public Relations, Reputation, Management, Strategies

### **Introduction**

Governments everywhere have established a variety of state processes and structures to support compliance with laws, safeguard national security, maintain peace, and safeguard lives and property, among other objectives. Among these organizations in Nigeria is the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Following the merger of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, the Nigeria Police Force was founded on April 1, 1930, having its main office situated in Lagos. According to Alemika (2010), the police have

historically been tasked with preventing and investigating crimes, apprehending criminals, responding to citizen distress calls, enforcing the law, and other duties dating back to the time of the colonial masters (indirect rule). However, a number of structural limitations have made it difficult for the Police to address the nation's security concerns. Because of the Nigeria Police Force's inability to uphold the institution's fundamental obligation to the nation's residents, corrupt activities, and, of course, certain structural flaws, the police have a poor public image and perception among

Nigerians, both at home and abroad. As a result of the Police's inefficiency, the public no longer supports, respects, or believes in them (Alemika 2010).

In response to the public's unfavourable opinion of the force and the need to keep lines of communication open, the late Kam Salem, a former Inspector General of Police (1966–1975), established the Force Public Relations Department as a legislative obligation of the force, however the work is still done by amateurs because the Nigeria Police Force considers public relations to be an overall obligation function under the office of administration. Therefore, the influence of public relations on police operations is reduced. Therefore, it became imperative to come up with a professional plan of action to handle the dilemma of the Nigerian Police Force's damaged reputation.

Ferguson, Wallace, and Chandler (2011) assert that whenever an issue arises, public relations professionals are depended on as communication experts to assume critical roles in avoiding damage to and maintaining stakeholders' trust in such an institution. In summary, Aliede (2004: 227) makes clear that public relations practitioners have a professional duty to conduct periodic critical evaluations of the actions, sentiments, and perspectives of the public regarding their organizations and to compare them with the organizations' actions and performance.

As a result, Keegan, Moriarty, and Duncan (1992) proposed that public relations activities are those that enhance an organization's reputation and foster goodwill and comprehension with its stakeholders. One aspect of management is public relations. It entails advising management at all organizational levels on communication, course of action, and policy choices while keeping the business's social and civic duties in mind. Regardless of the viewpoint, the fundamental idea behind each definition is

the same: developing a partnership that is advantageous to both sides. It places a strong emphasis on developing policies, strategizing, and effectively managing crises by dispelling myths and biases.

In Nigeria, the police are often criticized for their performance, manpower shortages, their inability to prevent and control crime, their poor attitudes towards the public, their inability to provide basic police facilities and equipment, and the ongoing hostility and tension that exists between the public and the police (Okeshola, 2008). The level of corruption inside the police force is another factor that has further strained the agency's relationship with the public and hindered its capacity to efficiently carry out its primary assigned duties of crime prevention and control.

Since its founding in 1930, the Nigeria Police Force has a lengthy history of acting in an unethical, dishonest, and illegal manner. This cumbersome force, the biggest in Africa has grown increasingly difficult to successfully lead and control over time, and it is now mainly unaccountable to the people it is supposed to protect. Many Nigerians feel that the police force has entirely not accomplished its purpose of maintaining public security, despite the fact that many police personnel in the country labour in difficult and usually hazardous circumstances and behave oneself wonderfully.

Consequently, given that public relations aim to create a positive image of an organization according to Massey (2003:16), who cites Treadwell and Harrison (1994), it is why organizational image management is thus crucial. And given that an organization's reputation is influenced by its actions, words, appearance, output, and performance as well as external elements including media reports, rumours, and reviews and praise from other stakeholders, image management calls for a

comprehensive approach to public relations. Against this background the study examined the image of the Nigerian police and as well seeks better ways to manage the reputation of the Nigerian police.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Eyewitness stories, media exposes on various vices, institutional shortcomings, and current photos and videos of certain corrupt police personnel are all indicators of the force's insensitivity, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness. These have impacted the institution's reputation and public perception in a significant way. As a result, despite the adage that "the police is your friend," relations between the population and the police are typically adversarial. As a result, over time, Nigerians' trust in the police as law enforcement officials has diminished (Human Rights Watch, 2012). As a result, there is a critical need to change how the Nigerian Police force is perceived by the general people. In line with the foregoing, this paper evaluated the Public Relations Strategies Adopted by the Nigerian Police Force for its reputation in Nasarawa State and FCT (Abuja).

### **Research Questions**

Specifically, this study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the public relations strategies adopted by the NPF to reposition the reputation of the force?
2. How effective are the public relations strategies adopted to reposition the reputation of the police force?
3. What are the challenges confronting the Nigeria police public relations departments in their efforts to manage the reputation of the police in Nasarawa State and FCT?

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Reputation management**

The problem of building and subsequently maintaining a good reputation is hundreds of years old. In the eighteenth century, Benjamin Franklin, a wise man, nowadays mostly known only as the face of the one-hundred-dollar bill, or an inventor of the lightning rod, described the process of building a reputation as an extremely fragile system. He used to say that it takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, but only one bad deed and the good reputation is immediately lost. Today, his words are more up to date than ever before. The rapid onset of mass-media communication in the second half of the twentieth century has fundamentally changed the established principles of corporate practice in many areas. Prior to the advent of the media era, the reputation of business entities, or even individuals, was not only hard to build but also well guarded. Procedures on how to build a good reputation have been honed for hundreds of years. Years of proven and effective reputation-building tools have almost seamlessly managed to offer solutions in difficult situations. However, times have changed, and the flow of information has accelerated. The nature of information has been adapted to fit the times. What was once private is now public. The availability of information in combination with the interactivity of the environment offers innumerable possibilities for influencing the reputation; of course, it is not just about influencing it in a positive sense. It may seem that the way to achieve a positive result is the effort to maximize transparency, maximum correctness and a positive approach to entrepreneurship (Marsden 2013).

However, Let us look at how reputation is defined within the scope of the available literature. In terms of reputation, the literature offers a wide range of views, from interpretational formalized views to views of an almost informal nature. In general, all of these views agree that reputation as a business asset is an extremely fragile element. At the same time, we are confronted with the claim that reputation is an element that every organization has to offer without distinction (Marsden 2013). Reputation is perceived as the overall quality, the optics, how the organization is perceived or judged by individuals (Griffin 2008). The definition is a fairly simple interpretation; on the other hand, the purely formal encyclopedic definition (Brittanica, 2016) deals with reputation, again as a general quality; this time, however, it extends this quality to the very nature of the organization, which is clear and known to the target audience, with emphasis being placed on how these audiences perceive the attitudes, actions, and opinions of the organization.

### **Concept of Public Relations**

The innate desire of humans to coexist peacefully as social creatures is known as public relations. Man needs to interact with other living things since he cannot survive alone. Developing and maintaining these kinds of relationships is the main goal of public relations. The fundamental tenet of public relations is that mutual understanding and knowledge provide the safest foundation for social relationships to flourish. Nwosu (1996)

According to the statement, public relations is the art and social science of assessing trends, projecting their effects, advising organisation leaders, and carrying out a planned course of action that will benefit the company and the general public. According to public relations studies, a relationship is any situation in which an

organisation and its major publics coexist and each party's actions have an impact on the other's political, social, economic, and/or cultural well-being.(Page 62, Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Furthermore, Onyenye (2009) contends that treating our clients like highly valued individuals is essential if we hope to gain their trust and win their business. Though occasionally it's hard to satisfy customers, it is however, the responsibility of public relations professionals to incorporate this policy regarding the cooperative relationship between the company and its clients. They ought to be able to project confidence in these clients by how they show themselves.

According to Kegku (2003, p. 6), maintaining a two-way communication channel between management and employees is one of the many responsibilities of employee relations in every business. It entails collaborating with the personnel and industrial relations departments to guarantee effective employee motivating practices and industry harmony within the company. As a management strategy, employee relations at universities involves asking staff members for their thoughts and opinions, involving them in the process, and rewarding their contributions with incentives like staff member awards, training, and sponsorship of skill development.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

There are rich empirical literatures on public perceptions of the police image in the fight against crimes. Ajayi, Ali and Olisa (2015) conducted a study on 'the perceptions of traders on police image in the fight against crimes in Nigeria.' A sample of 50 respondents each from 2 major markets in Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Anambra were taken. Their investigation showed that the Nigerian police are portrayed in a negative

light. The community at large does not view the police as allies or collaborators. Regular, responsible persons are said to be frequently harassed and intimidated by the police. People believe that the police are useless in addressing crime and disturbance. The study's participants berated the Nigerian police for being unduly influenced by political figures. The interests of people in positions of authority, especially those running the government, are primarily safeguarded by the police. Their research demonstrates that the average Nigerian perceives law enforcement as little more than apathetic pawns in a criminal system that primarily benefits a small number of influential political gang leaders. However the study and this one are similar but lack in methodology, geography and time.

In a different study, Olusola (2014) performed an assessment of the performance of the Nigerian police force in crime prevention and control. The study evaluated Nigeria Police's performance in crime prevention and control from the viewpoints of the civilian populace using Chambliss's (1975) political economics model of social control. To gather information from those who responded, the study included focus groups in addition to in-depth interviews. Ife Central, Ilesha West, and Osogbo local governments in Osun State were the three communities where the survey was conducted among their population. One noteworthy finding of Olusola's (2014) study is that police performance in Nigeria with regard to crime prevention and control has been negatively impacted by the bad nature of the interaction between the police and the population. It is significant to remember that Odinkalu (2004) also pointed out that an objective examination of the Nigerian police's operations shows that the police aren't ever a typical Nigerian's friend. Therefore, it is never easy for the public to cooperate with the police in carrying out their

main duty of preventing and controlling crime.

On the other hand, the public in the United States is generally satisfied with and confident in the police, according to empirical research (Frank, Brandl, Cullen, & Stichman, 1996; Nofziger & Williams, 2005); however, opinions differ depending on a person's age, gender, and race (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Nofziger & Williams, 2005). There is a growing corpus of cross-national research on policing perceptions, but significantly less on police image perceptions in other countries. Most of the sixty Nigerian college students who participated in the study said that the police were crooked, moved too quickly, treated people poorly, and used a lot of force (Alemika, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the Image Repair Theory. Image repair theory, often referred to as image restoration theory, was first presented by William Benoit in 1995. It describes tactics that can be employed to repair one's image after a reputation has been harmed. The notion of image restoration can be used to analyze situations involving organizational or psychological crises. Situations involving both human and organizational crises can be handled with this philosophy. Image repair theory is a subfield of communication during crises, which is a subset of PR. The aim of this is to protect the image of an individual, company, or group that continues to be openly criticized.

The apologia and account theories are the foundation of the notion of image repair. An apologia is an official defense or justification of an individual's opinions, position, or behaviour, while an account is a proclamation made by an individual or group to clarify unforeseen or offensive occurrences.

According to Benoit (1995), rather than offering solutions, the emphasis of these picture restoration procedures is on finding choices. He provides a thorough literature assessment of apologia and accounting theories to support his idea of image restoration. In *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A hypothesis of Image Restoration Strategies*, Benoit presents this hypothesis.

This theory is relevant to this study because the hallmark of this study is to restore the bad reputation of the police force in Nigeria. The main idea of the image restoration theory is premised on restoring one's reputation which requires perception because an accused actor is not going to adopt a defensive stance unless he believes he is to blame. In light of their particular circumstances, the actor who committed the wrongdoing must choose the best plan of action. Considerations therefore must be made for elements including audience perceptions and credibility. The police in Nigeria is suffering these issues which this theory addresses.

**Research Methodology**

This study adopted survey research design. This is because the techniques helps in choosing a sample to represent the entire population of the study. The survey research was adopted because of the nature of the research, which require meeting with the respondents in their natural settings to sample their opinion on the subject matter.

**Data Presentation**

**Table 1: What are the public relations strategies adopted by the NPF to reposition the image of the force?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Feature articles/news reports		

A sample size of 397 respondents was drawn from the population; the police public relations departments and police community relations committees in Nasarawa and FCT (Abuja) made up the population of the study. They were chosen because they are the people with the required information about the reputation of the force. The population of police public relations departments and police community relations committees in FCT (Abuja) and Nasarawa state is 397 comprising officers and civilians. Purposive sampling technique was used (*Source: police admin department Nasarawa state and FCT headquarters*).

Consequently, 397 people make up the study's sample size. A total of 397 questionnaires were distributed to the officers and personnel affiliated with the police community relations committee and public relations department. Tables were created using the responses that were provided by the respondents. To illustrate how each response relates to the other options accessible to the respondents, the computations were converted to percentages. The method clearly explains the rationale behind the solutions provided and facilitates analysis. The study addressed the relevant research question by using a straightforward percentage technique that is easy to understand. When assessing the data, the replies were totalled and grouped into frequency distributions, tables, percentages, and numbers and information about the study was analysed using nature.

in newspapers, magazines and Television programmes	120	30.2%
Press conferences addressed by IGP or PPRO, Special event	90	22.7%
Media relations and Community relations	20	5.1%
All-of -the-Above	167	42.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The implication of this result is that that Feature articles/news reports in newspapers and magazines, Television programmes and the likes only help to conceal the reputation

of the force to an extent. This means that improving the Nigerian police’s reputation needs to be a top priority.

**Table 2: How effective are the PR strategies adopted to reposition the reputation of the police**

**force?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agreed	120	30.2%
Agreed	167	42.1%
disagreed	90	22.7%
Strongly Disagreed	20	5.1%
Neutral	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the above table, it translates that police public relations strategies have been somewhat successful in improving the

institution’s negative reputation but a lot still needs to be done given the percentage of respondent who agreed.

**Table 3: What are the challenges confronting the Nigerian police PR unit in managing its reputation in Abuja and Nasarawa state include?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Lack of well trained and experienced		

Personnel (not available)	22	5.5%
Lack of proper orientation	70	17.6%
Lack of supervision of Personnel	35	8.8%
Lack of good Community relations	45	11.3%
Poor Media relations/publicity	50	12.6%
All of the above	175	44.1%
None of the above	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

The challenges of the Nigerian police force in Nasarawa state and Abuja according to this result include lack of well trained and experienced personnel, lack of proper orientation, lack of supervision of Personnel, lack of good Community relations and Poor Media relations/publicity. This indicates that a large number of respondents confirm that all of the concerns raised by respondents are the difficulties facing the Nigerian police force.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study assessed public relations strategies of the Nigeria police force in Nasarawa state and Abuja adopted for reputation management. The implication of the result from table 1 is that that Feature articles/news reports in newspapers and magazines, Television programmes, community relations and media relations, as well as press conferences addressed by IGP or PPRO and special events launders the reputation of the force without totally building on its image in the long run. Thus, improving the Nigerian police's force reputation needs to be a top priority that is holistic and not a quick fix. This is consistent with the conclusions of Alemika (2009), who said that minimizing corruption in the police force can aid in restoring the public's perception of the force

and help build confidence as obtainable in other countries. The implication the result in table 2 suggests that police public relations strategies have been somewhat successful in improving the institution's negative reputation.

The public relations department of the Nigerian Police Force face several obstacles in their attempts to manage the reputation of the police in Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory. The challenges of the Nigerian police force in Nasarawa state and Abuja include lack of well trained and experienced personnel, lack of proper orientation, lack of supervision of Personnel, lack of good Community relations and Poor Media relations/publicity. This indicates that a large number of respondents confirm that all of the concerns raised by respondents are the difficulties facing the Nigerian police force. This is consistent with Benoit's Denial Image Management Strategy (1995). It is important to remember, nevertheless, that denial is not a good strategy in Benoit's opinion because it prevents the development of workable remedial solutions. Their answers to other questions undermined their claims that the police have a positive reputation, so they were unable to maintain this denial. Rather than ignoring the subject, almost all of police officers questioned



claimed that corruption was to blame for the force's poor reputation; whereas the most of Nigerians believed that an absence of devotion was to blame.

Table 3 indicates that the public relations sections of the Nigerian police face several obstacles in their attempts to control the perception of the police in Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory from lack of well trained and experienced personnel to lack of proper orientation and lack of good community relations and inadequate media relations/publicity.

### **Conclusion**

The data used to support the study's conclusions demonstrated that the Nigerian Police Force's public relations strategies for enhancing its standing in Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) have somewhat lessened the force's unfavourable reputation. In addition, since the police code of conduct states that the human element is the core element of effective policing, PPRO must view solid media relations as an ongoing attempt that requires persistence, being beneficial, and continually searching for opportunities to present the force positively and encourage trust in the future. To be honest, in order to effectively apply PR techniques to enhance police image, visible policing is necessary. This involves four key elements: adequate money, preparedness, correcting institutional weaknesses, and a

change in officers' perspectives regarding unethical behaviour and the Nigerian public. This will surely increase public support for the police and reduce or eradicate the unfavourable perception of the force when carried out through well-thought-out, sustained public relations campaign.

### **Recommendations**

1. Sufficient funding and attention to correcting institutional shortcomings and reputation through trainings and reorientation be advocated for enhanced public-private relations of the Nigerian police force.
2. Reorientation, training, and ongoing punitive measures for incompetent officers: Since people comprise the institution, a concentrated effort should be made to support police officers' capacity development. This should also include reorienting police officers on appropriate behaviour while performing their duties. Furthermore, it is important to retain and uphold the necessary sanctions.
3. Better public-police relations: Since the two sides cannot exist without one another, efforts to preserve the public-police friendly connection must be maintained in other to improve and maintain its reputation.

## References

- Abdulkadir, M. B. (2004). *Measuring Police Effectiveness in Nigeria; An Evaluation of Input and Output in Crime and Policing in Nigeria; Challenges and Options*. CLEEN Foundation, Lagos. Pp 111-115
- Adegoke; N. (2014) The Nigeria Police and the challenges of security in Nigeria. Review of public administration and management. Volume 3 No 6. pp 21-36.
- Ajayi, G., Ali, S. and Olisa, M. (2015). The perceptions of traders on police image in the fight against crimes in Nigeria. *Policing Review*, Volume 1, Number 2, October: 72-95.
- Alemika E.E.O. (1999). Police Community Relation in Nigeria; What Went Wrong? Paper Presentation at the Seminar on Role and Function of the Police in a Post Military Era, organized by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN) Lagos and the National Human Commission.
- Alemika E.E.O. (2013). Rethinking crime prevention and crime control approaches in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigerian Sociological Society*. 2012;2(1):7-10
- Alemika, E. E. (2009). *National Criminal Victimization and Safety Survey, Summary of Findings*. Lagos: Cleen Foundation.
- Alemika, E. E., & Chukwuma, I. (2000). *Police-Community Violence in Nigeria*. Lagos Centre for Law Enforcement Education and National Human Rights Commission.
- Alemika, E.E.O. (2003). *Nigerian criminal justice system: mandates and challenges*. Jos: University of Jos Nigeria
- Alemika, E.E.O. 2003a. *State failure and alternative non-state civic actors in Nigeria*, Jos: University of Jos.
- Alemika, E.E.O. and Chukwuman, I. (2000). *Police community violence in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Law Enforcement Education and Human Rights Commission.
- Allen, J., Edmonds, S., Patterson, A., & Smith, D. (2006). *Policing and the Criminal Justice System – Public Confidence and Perceptions: Findings from the 2004/2005 British Crime Survey*. Home Office Online Report 07/06. London: Home Office.
- Asemah S. Mohammed G, Daniel o, Okpanachi A (2012) *Research Methods and Procedures in Mass Communication*
- Atoyebi, O.A. (2003). Ethnic militia groups, public security and police roles in Nigeria. A paper prepared for SASA Congress Holding on 29 June to 2 July 2003 in South Africa.
- Atoyebi, O.A. (2003). Ethnic militia groups, public security and police roles in Nigeria. A paper prepared for SASA Congress Holding on 29 June to 2 July 2003 in South Africa.

- Kashem, M. (2005). The social organization of police corruption: The case of Bangladesh. In R. Sarre, D. Das, & H. Albrecht (Eds.), *Policing corruption: International perspectives* (pp. 237-246). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Kelling, G., & Moore, M. (1988). The evolving strategy of policing. *Journal of Perspectives on Policing, 4*, 1-15.
- Kelling, G., & Moore, M. (1988). The evolving strategy of policing. *Journal of Perspectives on Policing, 4*, 1-15.
- Kratcoski, P. (2012). International Perspectives on Institutional and Police Corruption, *Journal of Police Practice and Research 3*, (1): 74.
- Ladapo, O. A. (2013) Effective Investigations, A Pivot to Efficient Criminal Justice Administration: Challenges in Nigeria, *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies, 5* (2) 79-94.
- Obarisiagbon, E.I. (2017). Kidnapping and the administration of criminal justice in selected states in Nigeria.
- Odekunle, F. (2004). Overview of policing in Nigeria: problems and suggestions. Ikeja-Lagos: Cleen foundation.
- Odekunle, F. (2004). Overview of policing in Nigeria: problems and suggestions. Ikeja-Lagos: Cleen foundation.
- Onyeozili, E.C. (2005). *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 1, April.
- Orobator, S.E. (1993). The political and socio-economic environment of policing since 1960. *Policing Nigeria past, present and future*. T. N. Tamuno; I.L Bashir; E.E.O. Alemika and A.O. Akano Eds. Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd.
- Van Kesteren, J., Mayhew, P., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2000). *Criminal victimization in seventeen industrialised countries: Key findings from the 2000 international crime victims' survey*. The Hague, Netherlands: Ministry of Justice.
- Wang, P. (2013). The rise of the Red Mafia in China: a case study of organised crime and corruption in Chongqing. *Trends in Organized Crime 16* (1): 49–73.
- Wu, Y. (2010). College students' evaluation of police performance: A comparison of Chinese and Americans. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*, 773-780.
- Wu, Y., Sun, I., & Smith, B. (2011). Race, immigration, and policing: Chinese immigrants' satisfaction with police. *Justice Quarterly, 28*, 745-774.