



An Assessment of Public Relations Practices of Selected Universities in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Public relations practice has become a matter of great concern to many individuals, institutions and corporate bodies in recent years. Notwithstanding the benefits of public relations to higher education, there are conflicting views about its significance to the operations of universities. Hence, this study focused on the assessment of public relation practices of selected universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The selected universities are University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu and Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu representing federal, state and privately owned universities respectively. The specific objectives of the study include to identify the role of public relations in promoting the image of the selected universities; to examine the management support of public relations practices in the selected universities. To identify the challenges public relations managers face in the selected universities; to investigate the specific measures public relations practitioners have taken to manage university related issues and crisis such as strikes, cult activities, examination malpractices, overpopulation. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Forty-three (43) staff of the public relations units of the three selected universities make up the target population of the study. Considering the small size of the population a census was undertaken. The frequency, percentage distribution tables and mean scores with the aid of SPSS software were used to analyze the data descriptively. The findings of the study revealed that public relations unit plays a significant role in promoting the image of the selected universities. It was also found out that the management gives fair supports for Public relations practices in the selected universities, the Public Relations unit is usually a party to all the decisions made, they are not only made to disseminate the information without making any input. The findings also revealed that public relations unit are largely faced with some specific challenges in selected universities altogether, and these challenges have effects in the public relations units' performances. Finally, it was also found that some specific measures were taken by the public relations units to manage the various crises and issues faced in the universities. However, these measures have been effective to a low extent.

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Introduction

One growing trend in the corporate world is the creation of an office for corporate communications or public relations to facilitate the propagation of an organization's vision and mission. Public relations operations vary from one organization to the other because of the differences in the vision, mission, goals and objectives, values and the products that an organization is established to offer its customer. Public Relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), 2015) ^[21]. The essence of public relations is

seemingly widening in many organizations today. According to Winston (2015), numerous large organizations either have a public relations department or outsource their public relations needs to a company. Public relations is seen as a vital part of maintaining the organization's image and of communicating its message to its customers, investors and other publics.

Over the years, public relations have been very important communication function of corporate bodies and organisations. Public relations tools which include publicity, sponsorship, event management as well as image and identity buildings have been in continuous use by organizations all over the world to promote their products/services and ideas (Dorny & Adiku, 2015) ^[6]. Having realized that public relations is a promotional tool use in making needs and programs known to various publics, higher educational institutions particularly, universities also began to use it to gain the support of their various publics.

For a public relations department to function as a management tool in the administration of a university, the unit must be seen identifying problems, difficulties or needs of the publics in and around the university establishing channels for information flow, and maintaining mutual and cordial relations with the publics. Although, universities relations with its public cannot be said to be the role of the public relations practitioners alone. However, all members of the university, especially those in leadership, top management and supervisory positions have a public relations role to play, all of which are coordinated by the public relations practitioner to inform the public with a holistic image about the university. The success of a university, depends on how information is handled in that organization. The efficiency and effectiveness with which information is managed determines to a large extent whether the institution will consistently be crisis-ridden or not. This is why no institution of higher learning can survive without the activities of the public relations department.

Enwonode (2004) ^[9] lamented that over the years, university administrations in Nigeria have not fully appreciated public relations practices in overcoming crisis that have plagued the academic excellence in our ivory tower. For some universities in Nigeria to continually face issues like strike, student unrest/ violence, cultism, malpractices, overpopulation, inadequate power supply, sudden closure of school, rustication/ expulsion of students or even retrenchment or premature retirement of some staffs among others from time to time simply reveals the fact that they have either neglected this all-important unit or are not giving this unit a free hand to operate.

Despite the benefits of public relations to higher education, there are some conflicting issues about its relevance to the operations of universities (Eniola, 2011) ^[8]. Public Relations officers responsible for public relations functions are often left out of decision-making. They are not accorded the status that will make them part of those decisions. This gives an impression of insignificance of their function as role players in the management of Universities. Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) ^[12] concurred that in tertiary institutions, most information and decisions are carried out and made at the committee level. Since public relations practitioners who are also administrators are not privileged to carry out their function of sourcing for information in universities and be part of the decision making process, they are hardly able to understand the decisions made by the academics because they

were not even part of the process. Notable public relations studies have been centered on the universities (Veena, Dayaneethie & Zukiswo, 2012) ^[29]. However, these studies were carried out the developed countries of Europe, Asia and America. Hence, there is need to carry out studies on public relations practices in the Nigerian universities. This study's main objective was to assess public relation practices of some selected Nigerian universities. Other specific objectives includes to identify the role of public relations in promoting the image of the selected universities; examine the management support of public relations practices in the selected universities; identify the challenges public relations managers face in the selected universities; and investigate on the specific measures public relations practitioners have taken to manage university related issues and crisis such as strikes, cult activities, examination malpractices, overpopulation, among others.

Literature Review

Public relations

Public relations stand to be one of the tools used in communications and it is a very crucial promotional tool for business organizations, because positive relations built with the public can directly and indirectly affect the organization's business activities. A review of modern public relations history gives a number of definitions. Public relations is the process of "building good relations with the firm's various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events" (ZainBooks.com, 2011). Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) ^[5] define public relations as a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.

According to Seitel (2007), one of the most ambitious searches for a universal definition was commissioned in 1975, by the Foundation of Public Relations Research and Education. Sixty-five public relations leaders' participated in the study, which analyzed 472 different definitions and offered the following 88-word sentence:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (p. 4).

Jefkins (2006). PR consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. The literature presents public relations as a management function, which uses the attributes of management (e.g., planning, Collaborative decision making and research) to foster the organization's ability to build mutually beneficial relationships on which the corporate vision and mission depend (Grunig, 2001) ^[11].

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) says "public relations are concerned with or devoted to creating mutual understanding among groups and institutions." The

PRSA recognizes the place of groups and institutions in the public relations process. It admits that these entities have interests that must be protected. It also presupposes a streamlining of these benefits for mutual good. The concept of mutuality in this definition makes you as a public relations man or woman an intermediary between your organisation and its publics. This implies that you should be able to align the interests of these two parties for their mutual advantage. You do this by convincing your organisation that public relations attempts to put the broad interest of the public first before the special interest of the organisation. By doing this, the organization is indirectly serving its own interest; hence PR has what is called “enlightened self interest”.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the United States alone, Public Relations is a multibillion-dollar business practiced by 158,000 professionals and the employment of public relations specialists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2012 (Seitel, 2007). Moore and Kalupa (2007) indicated that public relations as practiced today is a twentieth century American phenomenon and its fundamental elements of informing people, persuading people and integrating people were basic to earliest society just as they are today. The authors further emphasize that the effective tool to monitor and manage opinion of the general public is through extensive use of public relations practices.

Wells *et al.* (2005) opine that public relations is a management function practiced by a wide range of organizations, companies, governments, non-profit organizations, the educational system, labor unions, politicians, organized sports, and the media.

Therefore, the need for effective public relations in an increasingly competitive business environment should spur demand for public relations specialists in organizations of all types and sizes. Public relations practice as a field has grown immeasurably and today, it is clearly a grown industry (Seitel, 2007).

Public relations practice in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria

Public relations has been recognized as a management functions in institutions of higher learning to manage issues and crises. Public Relation keeps them informed on public opinion and the best to create a harmonious environment for academic work in this evolving world.

Public relations activities are necessary in these institutions so that the future can be predicted. The fact that every organization needs to work hard to maintain the policies goodwill points to the need for institutions of higher learning to work much harder because of the declining image Institutions of higher learning caused by problems ranging from the terror unleashed on innocent citizens by secret cults, student unrests, industrial action by the academic and non academic staff. But instead of having a viable public relations outfit to achieve the above objective, what we have in our institutions in the place of PR department is disorderliness. Salau (2001:57) ^[25] discovers that in some situations what is expected to be the public relations units are labeled information unit, some institutions call their PR department information and protocol unit while others label theirs PR unit. He also observed that in some institutions the PR departments is located in the office of the Chief Executive of such institution who may be the vice chancellor, rector or provost, and in some other institutions, PR departments is

attached to the Registrar who is the administrative head of that institution.

The consequences of the above arrangement is grave as the PR departments is not given a free hand to work since the PR Executive might be expected to perform the duties of a publicity officer or worst still act as an errand personnel under such an arrangement. Yet this is the arrangement we have in most of our institutions of higher learning.

Public relations is needed in institutions of higher learning because it is a powerful tool for improving the relationship with the internal and external publics (who may be hostile or indifferent) or cordial. In agreement with this statement, Salau said: In line with the professional objectives of public relations, personnel in public relations units of an institution are expected to ensure mutual understanding between these institutions and their various publics, so as to engender goodwill towards achieving the set objectives of these institutions.

Formally, institutions of higher learning used publicity in place of public relations but today, many of them have resorted to public relations to educate and inform their relevant publics about building good public image for their institutions.

Despite these recognition public relations has received, PR experts believe that PR is not yet taken seriously in educational institutions. However, in the past Public relations had not in recognition it is today. To Salau (2001:56) ^[25] ‘the awareness and more rapid flow of information across the country and outside have compelled managers of educational institutions to appreciate the importance of public relations’. Even with this recognition, some institutions of higher learning do not have a public relations department. The discovery of Fabukozor (2003:207) indicates that many institutions and organizations in the country do not have public relations department as a regular part of their management structures and where they exist, the practitioners operate under severe bureaucratic bottlenecks that inhibit the successful Implementation of their duties.

While, some institutions of higher learning that have PR departments only use them to produce calendars, journals and other gifts for the institution instead of allowing them to practice the real profession. This has made the impact of PR effort minimal in our institutions of higher learning.

Among the institutions of higher learning visited by the researcher in the course of this research only few University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Godfrey Okoye University, ESUT and Caritas have a viable public relations department or unit.

The Need for Public Relations for Institutions of Higher Learning

Public relations departments are placed at advantage to solve many needs of institutions of higher learning in area such as autonomy, finance, employee relations, maintaining good corporate, citizenship by curbing the menace of secret cult, community relations and media relations and maintaining sound academic programmes through excellent performance.

a. Autonomy: Institutions of higher learning are seriously agitating for freedom to manage their own affair. But because government is to grant this request, it raises dust from time to time in institutions of higher learning. For instance, making our universities autonomous was one of the reasons that made lecturers to go on strike in 2003. The strike lasted for six months-from January 2003-June 2003. It not only disrupted

academic programme but made many universities to lose academic year. However, if public relations department of Institutions of higher learning were working the way they should, they will be in a better position to counsel school authorities on how two-way symmetric communication can help them achieve mutual understanding with the government without having to use strike to achieve their purpose.

b. Financial need: There is no institution of higher learning that is self-sufficient. All of them depend on government and publics for fund. It has been pointed out in this work that the initial purpose of establishing public relations in institutions of higher learning was to generate public favour from tax payers whose money is used for funding of schools. Today, that need for funding of school still exists and so with good public relations strategies such funds can easily be received.

c. Employee relations: Many institutions of higher learning neglect their most important public and so the workers go on strike. At times, the institution is temporarily closed when the academic and non-teaching staff go on strike. Sometimes academic programme is grounded when the students revolt. When a good working environment is created for employees, they work happily, efficiency and productivity are increased while aggression is reduced. Eluwa - Benson (1998:143) added that "the employees in an organ determine how the outside world sees the organization which goes a long way to make organization either succeed or fail". This shows that the employees of institutions of higher learning are the mirror through which the institutions are seen. Since they are very close to the public's and the various institutions work for, the public's tend to believe everything they are told by the employees about their institutions. That is why there is need to maintain cordial relationship with the employees so that they will be better representatives of their institutions.

Okeke (2001:187) sees communication as a necessary tool to achieve good employee relations: He noted also that:

The hallmark of good organizational employee relations is primarily rooted in efficient management principles and practices, which helps an organization to conduct its business most profitably and thereafter commits the organization to provide the requisite enabling environment - good working conditions; recognition and respect for human dignity, personal values, rights and privileges, free and equal opportunity for advancement and reward for excellence (accomplishment); adequate latitude for self-discovery (potentials) and expression towards a more progressive and enlightened leadership; responsibility backed with the concomitant authority; proper supervision without being unnecessarily high - handed; payment of wages and benefits that are not only commensurate with productivity, but also in line with prevailing practice in other similar establishments and provision of other fair motivations accomplishment.

d. Maintaining good corporate citizenship by curbing the menace of secret cult: Great problem face institutions of higher learning such as the problem of reputation management caused by student's unrest. In one of his articles, Festus AkandeAkaride (2001:8) reported that in February 1997, a security report released by the then National security Adviser (NSA) AlhajiIsmailaGwarzor to the late Head of state revealed that about sixty six tertiary institutions and five secondary schools across the country were involved in cult activities. The above revelation might be shocking but

remains true. According to him: Between March and June 1997, about 130 students were expelled for offences ranging from involvement in cult activities to possession of fetish and dangerous paraphernalia believed to be associated with cultism in some institutions. These include the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Our Saviour Institute of science and Technology (OSISA TECH) Enugu; Obafemi Awolowo Universities (OAU) Ile-Ife; Osun state Polytechnic, Ede; Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo; Bayero University, Kano (Buk) Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo amongst others. That was not all; the report had it that around July 1997, about 300 students were arrested by security agents in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State where the College of Medicine of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) was located. Well, the question that was on people's mind after hearing his stories is "how do we get back our Ivory towers back to its former state against the backdrop of sound academic base and tranquility it enjoyed at its inception? For this dream to come true, public relations must be accorded its rightful place in all institutions of higher learning. It has been discovered that misunderstanding leads to most of the problems experienced in our institutions of higher learning. If students get enough information about cultism and the consequences of joining such groups, the number, that join cults every academic year would drastically reduce. Public relations provide the proper platform for such information - flow to because PR is all about creating mutual understanding through communication. To restore the image of our institutions of higher learning, image laundering becomes very necessary. Institution of higher learning in Nigeria which seeks recognition as positive point of reference, need to properly manage their image so that they would not be seen as no-go areas or bad influence on others.

d. Community relations/media relations: Academic work will go on smoothly in institutions of higher learning if harmonious environment is created. Oyeneye (1999:69) corroborates thus:

The success of an organization, be it educational or business depends to a large extent on the degree of peace and tranquility it enjoys in the community it is located. In public relations, no public is neglected whether internal or external publics. If the Internal publics are made comfortable while the external publics are neglected, they will make life unbearable for the school. The external publics to be remembered when planning public relations activities for institutions of higher learning include the government, the surrounding village, the mass media etc. Among these publics, the mass media need to be handled with care for the press men can make or mar an organization. Jeffkins (1998:78) reminds us that "the role of press relations is to achieve maximum publication or broadcasting for PR information in order to create knowledge and understanding" but this can be used the negative if the relationship between the press and the Institution is not cordial. To support this, Imahiyebo (2003:59) said that "media relations is the creation of relationship with journalist with the goal of persuading them to include the organizations message in their coverage' He concluded by saying, "obviously even the best and most successful PR campaigns are founded on good media relations

Crises arise in institutions of higher learning when the school authorities fail to balance the interest of various publics within and outside the institution. Salau (2001:58) ^[25] noted

that educational institutions and their host communities have had conflict over many issues ranging from admission and employment opportunities, litigation for appointment of indigenes to key positions in such institutions. There should be adequate information from the school authority to various publics concerning the policies of the institution. No policy or activity of the school should be at variance with that of the government. It is proper to maintain a closer and regular contact with both the internal and external publics. Again every information sent to the public's must be true and should be given on time because public relations is based on truth and full information. When a viable public relations unit is in an institution, it will evaluate its policies and the impact of such policies on the public. Modification of the policy becomes easy when there is regular evaluation of PR activities. It becomes a serious problem when public relations executives are seen as errand boys, under this arrangement, public relations professionals are relegated to the background where they take instructions from the chief executive. PR Professionals are also not made part of the decision making body. Most often their advice is not taken. This is the situation in many institutions of higher learning and that is why crisis seem to be part of every institution of higher learning in Nigeria, including the UNN, ESUT and Godfrey Okoye.

e. Maintaining sound academic programmes through excellent performance: Due to many problems often faced by institutions of higher learning, their academic programmes are often disrupted. So many people whose children are studying abroad made such decision due to unpredictability of programmes of tertiary institutions Nigeria. Students are only sure of when they are admitted to study in the university, polytechnic, or college of education but are never certain when the programme will end. Igben (2001:35) ^[13] quoted AnietieUsen, the West African Regional Editor of Africa Today, who said that he had lost confidence in the educational programme of Nigeria Universities essentially because of their lack of commitment to define the length of academic programmes. In essence not many institutions of higher learning can boast of not having lost an academic year due to one problem or the other? Not many can boast of following their academic calendar strictly Workers go on strike, schools are shut-down and academic year roll by with students at home wasting away simply because institutions of higher learning neglect a very important component of modern day management. If public relations of institutions of higher learning accept the practice of public relations as critical to harmonious environment required for the achievement of their academic growth, a lot of changes will be seen in our campuses, cult activities reduce, workers hardly go on strike and academic programmes not often disrupted, if public relations will impact positively in academic calendar of their institutions. Public relations departments of higher institutions must be accorded their rightful place in the organizational structure of institutions if our objective of getting the institutions of higher learning in this country back to their former glory must be attained

Related theories review

All who attempt to solve problems, make recommendations and predict the future, need theories, models, and as a starting point, concepts' (Skyttner, 2001). Theory provides a model for the practice of public relations. Three theories have been

chosen to provide the theoretical framework for this study. These theories are System theory, Situational theory and Public Relations Transfer theory. The public relations Transfer theory was propounded by Frank Jefkins in 1988. According to Nweke (2001), the theory is an antidote against some negative developments in organizations. Jefkins (1988) states that when the negative situation is converted into posited achievements through knowledge. The result predictably is the primary objective of public relations, Practice- understanding. Among the three theories mentioned, the study anchored significantly on the transfer process theory. The theory was suitable for the study, because perfection is something humanity cannot attain but always Strive towards. Based on this premise, organizations are bound to experience hostility, apathy and prejudice from members of their publics, and once an organization experiences any of these, the transfer process theory comes in handy. As such the model is said to be relevant to this work.

Related empirical studies review

Asikins and Akua (2015) examined using public relations as a management tool in tertiary Institutions in Ghana the objective of the study was to examine the extent of practice of public relations as a tool for facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the University of Educational Winneba. Data for the study was collected from a sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents sampled from staff of the university findings from the study showed that the university's public relations department was poorly resourced to perform its functions. Furthermore, the study revealed that the public relations position was neither accorded the same status as other senior management positions nor involved adequately in decision making. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the public relations unit of the University be adequately resourced and the practitioners adequately empowered.

In a related study of Odhiambo (2012) examined social media as a tool of marketing and creating brand awareness-in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine whether social media as a marketing tool has impact in creating brand awareness. The study adopted a case study research design. The findings presented in this study conducted that even though social media was more effective than some of the traditional advertising channels, it cannot be implemented in isolation without augmenting it with other forms of traditional advertising channels. The implications were that social channels. The Implications were that social media alone cannot single handedly create brand awareness or even develop business.

Odinioha and Wadike (2013) examined the social responsibility performance of higher educational institutions in Nigeria. The purpose of study was to check the impact level of Higher Institutions acted as socially responsible citizens. The study adopts a descriptive survey and a total of 120 respondents were issued questionnaire or interviewed, out of which only 86 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved in usable form. The study found that host communities' rates the institutions moderate in their social responsibility performance. They concluded part was that higher institutions should boost their relationship with communities through increased response to social issues. Krishnan (2007) studied the role of media relations in corporate public relations practice in Klang valley Malaysia.

The purpose of the study was discovering how media relations is viewed and utilized in Malaysian organizations. These issues are explored in 15 public listed companies across all industries in the Klang valley. The study adopted in-depth interviews. A structured interview questionnaire was used as the research instrument to elicit participant responses. The findings suggests that media relations play a strategic role to build relationship with the media as well as to inform and educate stakeholders in profiting and better managing the organizations reputations.

Raha, Long, Wan and Zaleha (2013) examined impact of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction and loyalty in Malaysia. The purpose of the study was to examine whether customer relationship management has impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study employs quantitative approach based on 300 respondents. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship of the variables. The finding shows that behavior of the employee's is significantly related and contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Methodology

The aim of the study is to assess public relations practices of selected universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Forty-three (43) staff of the public relations units of the three selected universities make up the target population of the study. Considering the small size of the population a census was undertaken. Questionnaire was used to collect primary data.

The research instrument was validated by some research experts and experienced academics in this area of study to ensure content validity. There was no need to further subject the instrument for convergent and discriminate validity since they had been validated by previous studies (see Pinner, *et al.*, 2014; Thapa, 2016) Reliability (of an instrument) refers to the consistency in reaching the same results when the measurement is made over and over again. Since the instrument for this study was adapted rather than taken verbatim from previous studies, the data generated from the pilot study were subjected to reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha which gave an alpha value of 0.86 which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Frequency, percentage distribution tables and mean scores with the aid of SPSS software were used to analyze the data descriptively.

Data Analysis and Results

In this chapter we present the data generated from the field survey, they were initially described using percentages and frequency. Later on we applied the mean in order to take decision concerning the objective of the study. Out of 43 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed only 18 copies were retrieved. Due to the fact that there were not enough respondents, most of the respondents did not fill the questionnaire. However, the 18 respondents are good representation of the population.

Descriptive statistics

In this section the data generated represented descriptively using frequency and percentage as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	8	18.6	44.4	44.4
	Female	10	23.3	55.6	100.0
	Total	18	41.9	100.0	
This Missing	System	25	58.1		
Total		43	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2021

The table 1 indicates that 8(44.4%) were male, while 10 (55.6) were female. This shows that there were more female respondents than male respondents.

Table 2: Marital status of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	1	2.3	5.6	5.6
	Married	14	32.6	77.8	83.3
	Divorced	1	2.3	5.6	88.9
	Widowed	2	4.7	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	41.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	58.1		
Total		43	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2021

The table 2 indicates that 1(5.6%) were single, 14(77.6%) were married, whereas 1(5.6%) were Divorced, while 2(11.1) were widowed. This shows that they were more married and widowed respondents than single and divorced respondents.

Table 3: Age range of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 30	3	7.0	16.7	16.7
	30-40 years	12	27.9	66.7	83.3
	41-50 years	3	7.0	16.7	100.0
	Total	18	41.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	58.1		
Total		43	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2021

The table 3 indicates that 3(16.7%) are below age of 30 years, 12(66.7%) are between the age of 30-40 years and 3(16.7%) are between the age of 41-50 years. This shows that they were more respondents between the ages of 30-40 years.

Table 4: Educational qualifications of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	OND/NCE	1	2.3	5.6	5.6
	HND/Bachelor's degree	11	25.6	61.1	66.7
	Masters	6	14.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	18	41.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	58.1		
Total		43	100.0		

Source: Field survey, 2021

The table 4 indicates that 1(5.6%) has OND/NCE qualifications, 11(61.1%) has HND/Bachelor's degree qualifications, 6(33.3%) has Masters Degree qualifications. This shows that more of respondents had HND/Bachelor's degree and Masters Qualifications.

Inferential statistics

Objective 1

N= total number

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f$$

	X	F	FX
SA	5	11	55
A	4	7	28
UD	3	0	0
D	2	0	0
SD	1	0	0
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=83$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 83/18 = 4.61$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that majority of the respondents agreed with to the statement that **'Public relations unit manage and market the image of this University to the general public'**.

Objective 2

	X	F	FX
SA	5	5	25
A	4	11	4
UD	3	1	3
D	2	0	0
SD	1	1	1
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=33$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 33/18 = 1.83$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that majority of the respondents did not agree with to the statement that **'Public relations unit participates in decisions making process that help in promoting the image of this University'**.

Objective 3

	X	F	FX
SA	5	11	55
A	4	7	28
UD	3	0	0
D	2	0	0
SD	1	0	0
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=83$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 83/18 = 4.61$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that **'Public relations use media relations to create goodwill for this university'**.

Objective 4

	X	F	FX
SA	5	3	15
A	4	8	32
UD	3	5	15
D	2	1	2
SD	1	1	1
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=65$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 65/18 = 3.6$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that, there is no enough data to show that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that **'University management appreciates the potentials of public relations as an effective instrument for managing issues/crisis'**.

Objective 5

	X	F	FX
SA	5	0	0
A	4	4	16
UD	3	7	21
D	2	5	10
SD	1	2	2
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=49$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 49/18 = 2.7$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that majority of the respondents did not agree with to the statement that **'University management gives staff of the public relations unit free hand to manage issues/crisis faced in this University'**.

Objective 6

	X	F	FX
SA	5	8	40
A	4	7	28
UD	3	0	0
D	2	0	0
SD	1	3	3
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=71$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 71/18 = 3.94$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that, there is no enough data to show that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that **'the challenges faced have a huge lot of effect on public relations programmes'**.

Objective 7

	X	F	FX
To a very low extent	5	4	20
To a low extent	4	8	32
To a moderate extent	3	4	12
To a high extent	2	2	4
To a very high extent	1	0	0
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=68$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 68/18 = 3.78$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that, there is no enough data to show that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that **'The measures taken have been effective'**.

Objective 8

	X	F	FX
SA	5	0	0
A	4	6	24
UD	3	0	0
D	2	0	0
SD	1	12	12
		$\sum F=18$	$\sum F=83$

$$\text{Mean} = \sum fx / \sum f = 36/18 = 2.0$$

The result of the above inferential statistical data indicates that, there is no enough data to show that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that '**There should be more strengthening of the public relations unit in this university**'.

Summary of Findings

The following are the findings of this research work:

1. 41.9% of the respondents were from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 32.6% of the respondents were from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, while 25.6% of the respondents were from Godfrey Okoye University.
2. The age distribution shows a trend supportive of a good succession plan as 16.6% are below 30years, 66.7% are between the ages of 30-40years and 16.7% are between the ages of 41-50years.
3. The educational qualifications of the respondents showed that 61.1% of the respondents were HND/Bachelor's degree holders, most followed by 33.3% respondents with Master Degree. This shows that the staff of Public Relations unit is highly educated.
4. Public relations unit manage and market the image of the selected Universities to the general public. This is in line with the response of 61.1% of the respondents.
5. 61.1% of the respondents agreed that public relations unit participates in decision making process that helps in promoting the image of the selected Universities.
6. 61.1% strongly agreed that public relations use media relations to create goodwill for the selected Universities.
7. The university management appreciates the potentials of Public Relations as an effective instrument for managing issues/crisis as supported by 44.4% respondents.
8. 38.9% respondents were undecided on whether the University management gives the staff of the Public Relations Unit free hand to manage issues/crisis faced in the selected universities, while 27.8 disagreed totally. Therefore, University management gives the staff of the Public Relations unit little free hand.
9. Inadequate funding was identified as the major challenge that confront the Public Relations Programme in the selected Universities, most followed by lack of participation in decision making as supported by 39.5% respondents and 32.6% respondents respectively.
10. 38.9% respondents agreed that the challenges faced have a huge lot of effect on Public Relations programmes.
11. Education and Enlightenment campaign was identified as the specific measures the Public Relations unit of the selected Universities employ in solving issues/crisis, most followed by Dialogue and Recommendation as supported by 43.3% and 36.7% respectively.
12. 44.4% of the respondents agreed that the measures taken have been effective to a low extent.
13. 66.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that there should be more strengthening of the Public Relations unit in the selected Universities.

Conclusions

The University management of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State Science and Technology and Godfrey Okoye University appreciate the potentials of Public

Relations as an effective instrument for managing issues/crisis, and whereas this University management gives the staff of Public Relations unit very little free hand to manage these crisis/issues by themselves..

Inadequate funding and lack of public relations unit participation in decision making, stood as the most major challenges that confront the Public Relations programmes. Where these staffs are not been motivated or encouraged with their incentives or salaries, where the Public Relations unit is usually not a party to all the decisions made, they are only made to disseminate the information without making any input. And it was agreed that the challenges faced have a huge lot of effect on Public Relations programmes.

The measure employed by Public Relations unit to solve Crisis/issues in the selected Universities have been effective to a low extent. The respondents agreed that there should be more strengthening of the Public Relations unit in the selected Universities.

Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher is therefore, recommending to the management of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State Science and Technology and Godfrey Okoye University the understated measures. The researcher is optimistic that the measure if fully implemented will help improve the public relations situations in the various Universities. These measures include:

1. Public Relations place in these selected Universities should be re-examined. The Public Relations unit should be a part of the University governing council to be able to bring in different perspectives to decisions that will affect the publics.
2. There is need for the University management of the selected universities to fully give Public Relations unit free hand and support to manage crisis/issues themselves
3. The Public Relations unit should be properly funded and furnished with modern tools and equipment for efficient service delivery.
4. Staff of Public Relations should be duly rewarded with their incentives and salaries, as this will highly motivate them to perform their roles effectively and efficiently.
5. There should be intensified Public Relations measures to further solve the issues/crisis that the Universities are confronted with.
6. The Public Relations unit should also endeavor to constantly communicate with its various public on its role and existence, policy and plan and work out an effective feedback mechanism so as to understand the feelings of their public towards a particular issue prior to implementation.

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