

## Public Relations and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State

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### Abstract

This study is titled *Public Relations and Image Management of the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State*. The study aimed to explore how the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations strategies to improve and project its image in Adamawa State. It was based on the Public Relations Transfer Process Model, with support from Systems Theory. The study employed a survey research method and used purposive sampling to select 130 police officers, predominantly from the Police Headquarters in Yola. In addition, 180 respondents were purposively chosen from the three senatorial zones in the state, including Jimeta, Mubi North, and Numan Local Government Areas. Data were collected using questionnaire, and the data analysis was done through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings revealed that while the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State acknowledges the role of public relations in relationship management and image management, its application remains limited. The most frequently used public relations strategy was making phone numbers available for public contacts. However, the study also highlighted that, although public relations efforts were being made, they were not being executed effectively. Additionally, the study identified various challenges faced by the police in applying public relations properly and effectively. These include insufficient working tools, a limited number of police officers, low public trust, and the absence of trained and certified public relations professionals within the police force. The study concluded that the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State is aware of the public's lack of trust and confidence in it, indicating that its relationship with the public is not as positive as expected. Consequently, the study recommended that the federal government should increase recruitment to match the growing population's security needs. It also suggested that public relations programs should be incorporated into the curriculum of the Nigeria Police Training Schools.

**Keywords:** Public Relations, Image Management, Nigeria Police Force, Publics, Perception

### Introduction

Image is what every organisation including public individuals do not take for granted. According to many studies, organisations are so much concerned about the kind of image they have in the eyes of their publics because it is a key factor that determines patronage of their services or products; it also determines the kind of relationship they have with their publics (Chiakaan, Tsafa & Idi, 2024; Chiakaan, 2016; Chile, 2013; Seitel, 1987). Incidentally, the subject matter of image management falls within the jurisdiction of public relations which is an aspect of mass communication inclined to indirect persuasive communication. According to Ajala (2001), Chiakaan and Chile (2020) as well as Black (1989) all the activities of public relations which are communicatively inclined are geared towards managing and projecting the favourable image of an organisation.

Public relations, basically, is concerned with relationships management. It is a tool that is used by organisations, private or public in order to achieve a mutual relationship with their publics. Public relations is, therefore, a relationship management tool. Organisations seek to have a cordial, peaceful and harmonious relationship with their publics in order to attract peace, friendliness and trust from them so as to enable them attain their goals smoothly. Individually, mutual relationship cannot be attained by an organisation where its publics perceive it as irresponsible, fake and deceitful. Where an organisation is perceived negatively, it implies that its corporate image is at stake and as such it is bound to suffer rejection as people will no longer be willing to do business with it.

Armed with the foregoing discourse, it can be noticed why an organisation must care about its image before its publics. This also justifies why a public organisation like the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) must care about the way members of the public view or perceive it and its officers generally. The Nigeria Police Force was established in 1930 during the colonial era. Since then, the various constitutions that had come on board after Nigeria became an independent country continued to maintain and strengthen the force. For instance, Section 214 and 216 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provide for the Nigeria Police. Section 214 of the 1999 constitution (as Amended) clearly posits that “There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force and subject to the provision of the section, no other Police Force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.” The Police is created by the constitution to prevent and detect crime, apprehend offenders, maintain law and order, safeguard life and property, and ensure proper enforcement of all laws and regulations within their jurisdiction.

The duties of the Nigeria Police Force make its operations known by the public since it is established to serve them. This implies that how Police Officers carry out their activities, and how they relate with the civil population cannot be a secret. The police, in order to succeed, needs the cooperation of members of the public they are out to protect and serve. Gaining their cooperation, therefore requires how they perceive them.

As earlier noted, perception, incidentally, is the major activity of public relations. Whether the police as an organisation is aware of public relations on one hand, and whether it is aware of public relations as an image and reputation management tool on the other is questionable. The situation is so given the fact that numerous studies by different scholars in the past clearly showed that the image of the Nigeria Police Force is negative (Nyam, 2020; Olusola, 2014; Okereke, 1995; Alemika, 1988).

More worrisome is also the misconception often surrounding public relations. According to Nwosu (2005), public relations appears to be one of the most misunderstood and misapplied tools. Nwosu has observed that some people misunderstood public relations for propaganda, giving bribe, dressing well, smiling with people, cover up, eyes service and such other derogatory acts. Public relations has nothing to do with these concepts. The implication of marrying public relations to these concepts is that it can be equally misapplied thereby causing damage to the image of an organisation. Given this fact, it becomes worrisome whether the police really understands and applies public relations properly in order to manage and project its corporate image in Nigeria which is the thrust of this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

The general duties of the Police, as stated in the Police Act of 1990, involve preventing and detecting crimes, apprehending offenders, ensuring law and order, safeguarding life and property, and effectively enforcing laws and regulations in Nigerian society.

Fundamentally, the Nigeria Police Force has been established to maintain law and order for the betterment of Nigerians and Nigeria as a whole. The force is expected to ensure a crime free Nigeria enabling citizens to go about peacefully conducting their businesses legally. This further shows the answerability of the Nigeria police to Nigerians as it is expected to serve Nigerians well thereby enabling Nigerians to have confidence in the force.

Scholars have expressed concerns about the capacity of the Nigerian police to effectively discharge its responsibilities of fighting criminality and protecting lives and property (Dauda, 2023, Nnadozei, 2021, Nyam, 2020; Okereke, 1995). Studies by these and many other scholars including reports from the Amnesty International (2022, 2023 and 2024) have indicted the Nigeria Police Force and its officers of unprofessional conduct as a result of corruption, bribery, immorality and extra judicial killings.

These negative reports about the police raise the question of whether the force is conscious of its image in the eyes of the public it is out to serve. Significantly, the reports raise the question of whether the Police Force is even aware of public relations and what it is capable of doing as far as image management is concerned. Incidentally, the police appear not to be in the dark totally about the various reports and stories indicting it; where it is aware, it is expected that there should be a change in the behaviour or attitude of the police towards its responsibilities in Nigeria. Whether the police have changed or is changing is what is still yet to be ascertained.

Furthermore, existing studies on the relationship between the Nigeria Police Force and the public, as well as the perception of Nigerians toward the Force, have focused on other states in Nigeria; no study has been conducted to assess how the force uses public relations to improve and project its image in Adamawa State. Therefore, this study examines how the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations to manage its image in Adamawa State

**Objective of the study**

The overall objective of this study is to examine how the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations to improve and project its corporate image in Adamawa State. The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To determine the extent the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations in redeeming and projecting its image in Adamawa State.
- ii. To determine the public relations approaches the Nigeria Police Force adopts in managing its image in Adamawa State.
- iii. To find out how the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State.
- iv. To assess how effective the public relations approaches of the Nigeria Police Force are in managing its image in Adamawa State.
- v. To unravel the challenges, if any, facing the Nigeria Police Force in applying public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Public Relations**

Public relations is not a tactic for cover-up, nor does it involve sycophancy or empty promises; it is also not propaganda. Interestingly, Osuji (2001) argues that public relations is not a form of bribery. Nwosu (2005) similarly asserts that it is not bribery, propaganda, or mere window dressing. Modern public relations adopt a mixed approach, using it as a tool to gain the affection, sympathy, understanding, and support of the public for an organization, fostering harmonious coexistence that leads to development. Where public relations applied to achieve development, it is known as developmental public relations. In 1978, the World Assembly of Public Relations, which convened in Mexico City, came out with a definition of public relations that became known as the Mexican Statement. As noted by Chiakaan, Tsafa and Idi (2024), the Assembly defined public relations as the art and science of analyzing trends and implementing planned actions that serve both the organization and the public interest. The term “relationship” in public relations refers to the interaction or connection between an organization and its key publics.

The publics of an organization are very important for the attainment of its goals. Publics, in this regard, are those otherwise referred to by Oyeneye (1997), Offonry (1985), Sambe (2008) Matera and Artigue (2000) as stakeholders whose actions have the capacity to affect the operations of an organization positively or negatively. They are individuals or groups who experience direct or indirect impacts from an organization's activities.

No organization that is out to achieve its goals takes its publics for granted. Public relations is, therefore a tool that is employed by organizations to ensure that there is a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its key audiences; it is a tool that always ensures that an organization's policies are also beneficial to its publics.

Chiakaan and Oliver (2020) posit that public relations preach symbiosis or interdependence between an organization and its public. Ajala (2005) describes public relations as the overall conduct of an organization or individual designed to gain public approval, leading to sustained progress that benefits both the entity and the community or society in which it functions. Ajala's perspective about public relations is very acceptable because it has shifted public relations practice from what it used to be in the 1960s and 70s when emphasis was more on theory than its practice (Keghku, 2005).

According to Femi (1997), effective public relations is dependent on planned deliberate and sustained efforts by an organization. This shows that public relations is inclined to science, it is inclined to science since its activities must be planned before they are carried out. Planning is, therefore, a key public relations function because careful planning by an organization enables it to successfully attain its goals. This entails the sustainable aspect of public relations. Also emphasizing on the sustainable nature of Public Relations, the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR), formed in London in 1984 describes public relations as “the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.” Through public relations, an organization can achieve understanding that can be sustained with its publics. An organization that applies public relations appropriately and effectively can, therefore, have a positive perception of its image by its publics.

### **Concept of Image**

Image and perception, according to Chiakaan, Tsafa and Idi (2024), are the same. Image is what every responsible organization or individual cares for. An organization that does not have a good image in the eyes of its publics is bound to fail in attaining its goals; it will suffer lack of patronage

or total rejection from its publics. When people do not think well or positive about an organization, they can equally not act positively towards it (Chiakaan *et al*, 2024).

Image is a mental presentation of an organization and its services or products. It is a product of the way human beings perceive others and organizations operating in their society. The way a country like Nigeria is perceived by Nigerians and people in other countries represents her image. Chiakaan and Chile (2020) in their contribution to the subject matter of perception acknowledge that “perception is the act of taking possession, obtaining, receiving, perceiving a mental image, awareness of the elements of environments through physical sensation...” (p. 100).

Perception, from the forgoing discourse, is the feeling, views, thoughts of individuals about others. The perception of Nigerians about the Nigeria Police Force is, therefore, their feelings, their impressions, or views about the force. Where they perceive the force as being corrupt, brutal, immoral, anti-civilians, and so on, they are likely not to have confidence in the personnel of the police organization, they will be reluctant to even Join the Police Force; they will be unwilling to collaborate with the Police Force in fighting crime. This explains why the Nigeria Police Force must care and strive for a good or positive image outside there.

### Types of Image

Image which can be formed by an individual as a result of his/her experience or contact with an organization exists in different ways. According to Nwosu (1996), Keghku (2005), Chiakaan, Tsafa and Idi (2024), Oyeneye (1997) and many other scholars, there are a variety of types of image; they include:

**Mirror Image:** Mirror Image is the kind of image an organization has about itself. It can be equated with a person watching himself in the mirror to have a feeling of how he is or looks like. Most often, the image we have of ourselves is not true. This is equally applicable to organizations and those working for them as they sometimes feel that they are loved by the public where as in the real sense; they are not due to certain factors. It is always difficult for the outside public to have the same impression with that of the inside publics about organizations. Mirror image is, therefore, very deceptive. It is not a good or reliable image.

**Current Image:** This kind of image reflects currency or present. How an organization is presently perceived by members of the public is what this image entails. Usually, the opinion outsiders have about an organization is a product of their knowledge about it due to their contacts with it. Sometimes people’s opinions about an organization may be influenced by what others say about it which may sometimes be true or false. The current image is, therefore in opposition to the mirror image. Conflict arises as a result of the fact that sometimes what the outside publics think about an organization may be different from the way those who are inside that organization think about it. It is because of this conflict that organizations are advised to be conducting opinion or perception research always to enable them know how they are perceived by their external publics.

**Wish Image:** Wishing to have something is different from having it. Wish, therefore, represents the desire to have something rather than actually having that thing. This shows that wish image is the image a person or an organization is willing or desiring to have. The Nigeria Police Force, in order to make Nigerians have faith and trust in it, has this slogan, “Police is your Friend” This slogan is a mere wish, the attitude of Police personnel seems to present a different image of the force to members of the public.

**Corporate Image:** This image is the best kind of image. It is the image which every organization that is out to faithfully serve members of the public seeks to attain and sustain. Corporate image

involves both the internal and external publics of an organization. This kind of image represents the general and overall impression which members of the public have about an organization. Salu (1993) states that corporate image “is a reflection of an organization’s character, policies, activities, products, and personalities,” (p. 31).

Corporate image is what the Nigeria Police should be ascribing for. It involves the way the police personnel relate with members of the public, it involves the general attitude or behavior of police officers in offices, on close gap roads, it involves the way and manner police officers dress and go about their duties generally.

**Multiple Image:** This is the image of an organization held in parts by members of the public. An organization under multiple image is held in different perspectives. For instance, the behavior of staff of an organization can be judged like the product of such an organization; the colour of an organization can be equally judged; an organization is perceived differently by both its internal and external publics based on its individual components. The behavior of police officers, for instance, can attract a judgment or perspective from members of the public which may be different from the police personnel.

### **Public Perception of the Nigeria Police**

Many studies carried out by different scholars about the feelings, opinions or views of Nigerians whom the police are expected to be serving, have shown that the police force does not have a positive or good image in the country. For instance, an investigative study by Dauda (2023) to assess the public's view about the Nigeria Police Force’s ability in controlling crime and ensuring that the rights of citizens were not violated in Maiduguri, Borno State, revealed a negative result against the police force. According to the study, people perceived the police as being incapable of fighting crime; the police had been indicted for violating the fundamental human rights granted them by nature and constitution.

Other similar studies by Nnadozie (2021) and Nyam (2020) have collectively shown that Nigerians have no reliability and assurance in the Nigeria Police Force. This lack of reliability and assurance in the force is as a result of their belief that the police personnel are corrupt, brutal or aggressive to Nigerians. The implication of the perceived aggression, brutality and corruption of the police force is that the Nigerian civil populace does not perceive the police as their friend with whom they can collaborate with in fighting crime. Some Nigerians do not even want to be recruited into the police force.

Recent reports from Civil Liberty Organizations including Amnesty International about police relations with their publics have indicted the police as being corrupt and anti-human. The reports have accused the Nigeria Police of extrajudicial killings during the End SARS protest and End Bad Governance protest in 2022 and 2024 respectively in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2022 and 2024). It can be concluded, grounded upon forgoing discourse, that the image of the Nigeria Police Force has not been good. This implies that the force has to employ the weapon of public relations to redeem and sustain its corporate image.

Institutions worldwide utilize the tools of identity, image, and reputation management to achieve their objectives and enhance their presence within their operating areas. Fleishman (2000) asserts that an institution can only fulfill its goals if its image, identity, and reputation are strong, well-managed, and coordinated.

Ajala (2005) explains that an institution's image, irrespective of its type, plays a crucial role in determining how it is perceived by the public at any given moment. Perception acts as a gauge for both the institution's internal and external stakeholders, reflecting how effectively or ineffectively it engages with both groups.

### **Approaches of Public Relations**

There is a difference between public relations approaches and public relations strategies. According to Chiakaan (2016), while strategies which are broader than approaches involve a blue-print that will guide public relations officers in attaining their goals for their organizations, strategy, according to Gregory (2010), Oliver (2010) and Thompson (1995) involves the totality of an organization's programmes; its individual activities and how it intends to go about carrying them out.

Approaches are found within the strategies; public relations approaches enable the implementation of public relations plans or strategies. Public relations approaches are also referred to as public relations principles, gimmicks, tactics, techniques, tools or apparatus. Public relations techniques are used by organisations in executing their plans and attaining their goals. The public relations approaches, as further identified and discussed by Black (1989) and Jefkins (1989) include:

**Press Releases:** A press release is an authentic position of an organization about an issue involving it, presented to members of the public through the media. It is a piece of information emanating from the public relations office or department of an organization submitted to a media organization for publication for mass consumption; such an issue usually bothers on the image of such an organization. Press releases, usually expected to be written in the journalistic style of news writing enable organizations to reach their publics with information about issues that concern them.

**Press Conferences:** By organizing and holding press conferences, organizations are able to interact with journalists and clearly present their positions on issues that concern them thereby enabling them to be better understood by members of the public.

**Publication of Magazines /Newspapers:** Public relations officers of organizations also publish in-house magazines, newsletters, and newspapers that carry information on different activities or events occurring in their organizations. This has the capacity of making the publics know about the successes and even challenges facing their organizations.

**Media Relations:** This is another important tactic public relations practitioners employ to sell the positive image of their organizations in the society. Baran (2002) in Ukpo (2022) posits that media relations is majorly concerned with achieving and sustaining a friendly and peaceful relationship with professionals in the media industry. Understanding who media men and women are and what journalism is all about go a long way in enabling a sound relationship between organisations and journalists.

**Crisis Management:** Crisis management is another important public relations technique of ensuring that an organization is in harmony with its publics. Ajala (2001) states that "a crisis is an unexpected development which very often embarrasses an organization, frightens the public and puts a company's credibility and decency under intense scrutiny" (p. 74). Managing crises enables an organization to experience peace which goes a long way in enabling it to attain its goals.

**Events Management:** Events from time to time come up in an organization. The public of an organization are expected to be invited to attend and witness such events. Where such events are well planned and executed, they can go a long way in promoting the corporate image of an

organization. In conclusion, public relations being a proactively inclined profession, has a plethora of techniques which it uses in projecting the corporate image of an organization. Essentially, all the tactics are inclined to communication. Communication in this regard, appears to be the major activity of public relations. This indispensability of communication to the attainment of public relations goals for an organization has been captured by Haywood (1992) who posits that organizations debate whether they should engage in public relations; however, they have no alternative, as every organization inherently involves public relations.

### **Challenges of the Nigeria Police**

The ongoing security challenges and the inability of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to ensure the safety of lives and property across the country remain alarming. The causes of these security issues are numerous and cannot be attributed to a single aspect of the system. According to Ihedioha and Terna (2024), considering the level of security provided by the Nigeria Police for the entire population alongside other functions of the force, it is evident that their performance falls significantly short of public expectations.

Several interconnected issues contribute to the poor performance of the Nigeria Police Force. These challenges include material and human factors, as well as external influences. One major issue is the inadequate remuneration of police officers, which has negatively impacted their ability to effectively carry out their constitutional duties. Additionally, corruption, as previously discussed, is not limited to interactions between the police and the public but is also present within the police hierarchy. There have been instances where senior officers have withheld salary increments for lower-ranking officers, allegedly placing the funds in fixed deposit accounts to generate personal interest before eventually disbursing the money (Ihedioha & Terna, 2024).

A study conducted by Ogbodo (2023) highlights that the Federal Government's centralization of the Nigeria Police Force's command structure has weakened the ability of state governments to efficiently address crime within their jurisdictions. Furthermore, the study points out that limiting state control over police resources has contributed to the growing crime rate in Nigeria. According to the findings of Odekunle (2004), Ogbodo (2023), and Nwachukwu et al. (2024), various challenges hinder the Nigeria Police Force from effectively carrying out its duties and responsibilities. These challenges include:

**Shortage of Manpower:** One of the major challenges facing the Nigeria Police Force today is issue of manpower shortage. It is important to note that the current strength of the Nigeria Police Force today is less than four hundred thousand (400,000.00) personnel to police a country of over two hundred million (200,000,000.00) people which contravene the United Nation recommendation of one to every four hundred (1:400) people. One police officer for every 400 people is now the norm in many western nations (including the United States, Britain, France, and others), which is thought to be reasonable for improving crime control.

**Inadequate Funding:** One of the major barriers that have historically prevented the police from preventing crimes and criminality and also to effectively carry out strategic or proactive policing in Nigeria today is mainly inadequate funding. This has compromised the ability of the Nigeria Police Force to fulfill its mandate to the citizens. Funding will be needed, according to Adewusi (1990) "to adapt crime control and preventive strategies. Police needs resources for criminal investigation and detection.

**Corruption and Lack of Integrity/Trust:** Corruption has been a recurring decimal affecting the Nigeria Police Force which can also be a hindrance to the implementation of strategic or proactive policing. The Nigeria Police Force today has lost the trust of members of the general public due to factors like incivility to members of the public, gross abuse of the citizens' fundamental human rights etcetera. Elgege (2006) states that a public official's honesty is an essential quality. It establishes guidelines for behavior when carrying out official tasks. The Nigeria Police officers, for example, are said to be dishonest and are said to regularly engage in criminal acts to demonstrate their lack of professionalism and great unreliability while in most cases, they protect the rich and through bribery, blackmail, and intimidation, they frequently use their status to oppress their fellow citizens.

**Lack of Adoption of Technology and Data-Driven Policing:** Scholars of data-driven policing strategies assert that their adoption makes policing more efficient, effective and accountable to addressing challenges faced by the police in combating crime and criminality in any given society. The Nigeria Police Force has not taken drastic measures to fully utilize technology and data-driven policing, this can be mainly due to lack of sufficient funds to procure modern technology and adequately train their personnel; this lack of data-driving policing has compromised the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force in preventing, detecting and investigating crimes as well as compromising public trust and confidence.

**Leadership:** The negative role of the political leadership class in the entrenchment of corruption in Nigeria basically explains what results in the poor image of the police in Nigeria. Tignor (1993) examined and discussed political corruption in Nigeria from a historical point of view before independence, the activities of Nigerian nationalists and the colonial masters and observed that the police cannot be an exception. The police are corrupt because the political leadership class in Nigeria is corrupt. The political leadership class in Nigeria cannot exonerate itself from the current travails of the police in the country.

**Governmental Structure:** Nigeria's policies concerning police at different times have been influenced by different political experiences. Government officials act as decision makers, thereby influencing the formulation of internal policies in Nigeria. In formulation of internal policies in the democratic dispensation, the president, minister of internal affairs and the parliament or legislature influence the making of the policies. Therefore, there is a long process before a policy is made as these involve broad consultations leading to truncated due process leading to failure of polices.

**Lack of Incentives and Motivation:** The police have no good pay and no encouraging financial facility or benefits. The police are abandoned by the government, hated and avoided by the public. Police quarters are in shambles with very low salary. The police therefore have no shame to collect and give balances back to drivers on the traffic and highways. Government neglect of the Nigeria police appears to have no end.

**Internal Environment:** Changes, disturbances or disorders that occur within Nigeria's internal environment have influenced the nature and course of her internal policy. The level of ethnic cleansing and social disharmony and group suspicion in Nigeria has negated the democratization of the process of policy making.

**Social Structure:** The nature of social group diversity and the degree of conflict and harmony that characterize the mutual relationship in Nigeria is determinant in the formulation of internal policy.

Therefore, there is a long process before policy is made as these involved broad consultations and due process.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the public relations transfer process model and supported by the systems theory. The public relations transfer model was propounded by a renowned public relations expert in person of Frank Jefkins in 1988. The model, according to Ajala (2001), Chiakaan and Chile (2021) Kechku (2005) and Nwosu (1996), is concerned with changing what is bad to what is good. The model sees public relations function as mainly that of changing negative situations or affairs concerning organisations to positive. Below is a diagram of the model:

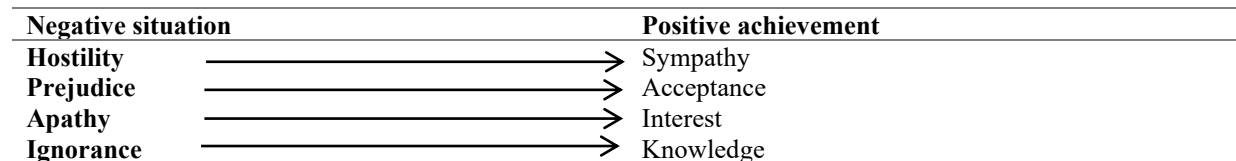


Fig. 1. A diagram sharing Frank Jefkins transfer process of public relations.

Interpretatively, according to the model, public relations activities involve making people who are hostile to an organization to be sympathetic to it. Where people hold prejudice against an organization, public relations is expected to make them accept it. People's apathetic attitude, towards an organization can be changed so that they can have interest in its activities, products or services.

Perhaps, the negative perception or attitude of people towards an organization may be as a result of ignorance caused by lack of knowledge about it, public relations is expected to embark on effective communication to make the people knowledgeable about it and its activities accordingly. In summary, communication which is one of the major activities of public relations is expected to be applied in changing a negative situation to a positive one for the interest of an organization (Chiakaan, 2021). This implies that this model charges public relations with the responsibility of changing or transferring a negative situation to a positive one.

Using public relations properly in line with the demand of this model, the negative perception which members of the public have about the Nigeria Police Force and its personnel will change to a positive one. Perhaps, the Nigeria Police Force as an organization is not aware, perhaps, it does not know how to apply public relations effectively to manage its image. On the other hand, the hostility, prejudice, apathy towards the Nigeria Police Officers by the people may be as a result of ignorance due to lack of adequate knowledge, applying this model as preached by Frank Jefkins can change the narrative.

### Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research method. The population of this study comprises both officers of the Nigeria Police Force and civilian populace in Adamawa State. Based on information obtained from the department of the Police Public Relations (PPR) in Adamawa State, there are 6,750 police officers in Adamawa State. The population of Adamawa State is 4,902,100 (National Population Commission [NPC], 2022). Therefore, the population of the study is 4,908,856. The study adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1974) sampling size determination tabular formula to determine its size of 300. It employed purposive sampling method to sample respondents involving both police officers and members of the public across Adamawa State. On this note, 130 police officers, majorly drawn from police headquarters in Yola where the office of

the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) is located were picked. Judgmental sampling technique was employed because it enabled the researcher to sample only Officers with high knowledge about the operations of the police force in Adamawa State.

The study further purposively sampled 180 respondents across the three senatorial zones in the state involving Jimeta, Mubi North and Numan local government areas. In this regard, 60 respondents were sampled from each of the three sampled areas. The study utilized questionnaire as the data collection tool. It employed quantitative method in presenting and analysing data. The collected data were analyzed and presented in simple percentages through tabulation to assess the frequency of responses to the questions posed in the questionnaire. Additionally, the data underwent contextual analysis for deeper insight.

## Result of the Findings

**Table 1: The Extent Nigeria Police Force Applies Public Relations in Managing, Redeeming and Promoting its Good Image in Adamawa State.**

| Responses        | Frequency  | Percentage |
|------------------|------------|------------|
| To a high extent | 109        | 37         |
| To a low extent  | 177        | 60         |
| To no extent     | 10         | 03         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>296</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 seeks to know the extent the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations in managing, redeeming and promoting its good image in Adamawa State. Here, 109 (37%) of respondents said to a high extent, 117 (60%) of the respondents said to a low extent, while only 10 (03%) of the respondents said to no extent. This shows that the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations to a low extent (60%) in managing, redeeming and promoting its good image in Adamawa State.

**Table 2: Public Relations Technique Which the Nigeria Police Force Applies in Ensuring that People Talk Good about it and its Officers in Adamawa State.**

| Responses                                                                                                                        | Frequency  | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Making phone numbers available for the public to be calling and reporting Police Officers, embarking on unprofessional practices | 100        | 34         |
| Involving key people in the State in some committees                                                                             | 23         | 08         |
| Attending events taking place in the State.                                                                                      | 24         | 08         |
| Holding regular meetings with stake holders like traditional, religious leaders and other stake holders.                         | 14         | 05         |
| Appearing regularly on radio/television and using social media to interact with members of the public                            | 12         | 04         |
| Always checking to ensure that police officers do not take bribe or harass members of the public.                                | 14         | 05         |
| Always checking to ensure that police officers properly dress in their uniforms while on duty                                    | 07         | 02         |
| Ensuring that cases brought to police stations are sincerely and promptly handled                                                | 37         | 12         |
| Demonstrating commitment to fighting crime, protecting lives and property in the State.                                          | 65         | 22         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>296</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The concern of data collected in Table 2 is to identify the public relations techniques that the Nigeria Police Force applies in ensuring that people talk good about it and its officers in Adamawa

State. Data in this regard show that 100 (34%) sampled respondents identified making phone numbers available for members of the public to be calling and reporting police officers embarking on unprofessional practices, 23 (08%) identified involving key people in the state in some committees, 24 (08%) identified attending events taking place in the state, 14 (05%) picked tent with holding regular meetings with stakeholders like traditional, religious leaders and other stakeholders; and 12 (04%) of the respondents identified appearing regularly on radio/television and using social media to interact with members of the public. According to 07 (02%) another measure include checking and ensuring that police officers dress properly in their uniforms while on duty, 14 (05%), identified checking to ensure that police officers do not take bribes or harass members of the public, 37 (12%), identified ensuring that cases brought to police stations are sincerely and properly handled; demonstrating commitment to fighting crime, protecting lives and properties in the state is another measure identified by 65 (22%) respondents. This shows that there are several public relations techniques the Nigeria Polies Force applies in ensuring that people talk good about it and its officers in Adamawa State.

**Table 3: The Way and Manner the Nigeria Police Force Applies Public Relations in Managing its Image in Adamawa State**

| Responses                                                   | Frequency  | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| It is applying it as professionally expected                | 66         | 22         |
| It is not applying it properly                              | 162        | 55         |
| It seems to be confused about how to apply public relations | 68         | 23         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                | <b>296</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data in Table 3 is concerned with the way and manner the Nigeria Police Force applies public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State. Respondents, 66 (22%) affirmed that it is applying it as professionally expected, 162 (55%) claimed it is not properly applying it, while 68 (23%) of the respondents, opined that it seems to be confused about how to apply public relations. By implication, the Nigeria Police Force does not properly apply public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State.

**Table 4: Effect of the Application of Public Relations on the Image of the Nigerian Police Force in Adamawa State**

| Responses                                                                               | Frequency  | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| People talk good about the Police in the State                                          | 62         | 21         |
| Majority of the youth in the State are willing to be recruited into the force           | 22         | 07         |
| People have confidence and trust in the police and corporate with it in fighting crime. | 11         | 04         |
| People still do not say good things about the police                                    | 202        | 68         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                            | <b>296</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 presents information on the effect of the application of public relations on the image of the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State. Accordingly, 62 (21%) of the sampled respondents affirmed that people talk good about the police in the state, 22 (07%) were of the view that majority of the youth in the state are willing to be recruited into the force, 11 (04%) claimed that people have confidence and trust in the police and cooperates with it in fighting crime, while 202 (60%) confirmed that people still do not say good things about the police. This shows that even though

police apply public relations, people in Adamawa State still do not say good things about the police. This shows further that the image of the force is still negative in the study area.

**Table 5: Challenges of the Nigeria Police in the Application of Public Relations in Managing its Image in Adamawa State**

| Responses                                                                                                 | Frequency  | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| The number of police officers is too small compare to the size and population of the state                | 74         | 25         |
| Some members of the public are not willing to collaborate with the police in reporting and fighting crime | 83         | 28         |
| Lack of enough vehicles and other tools to enable the police carry out its activities effectively         | 84         | 28         |
| Lack of trained, certified people as public relations officers in the police force                        | 55         | 19         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                              | <b>296</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data in Table 5 show the challenges of the Nigeria Police Force in the application of public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State. Here, 74 respondents (25%) pointed out that the number of police officers is too small compared to the size and population of the state, and 83 (28%) stated that some members of the public are not willing to collaborate with police in reporting and fighting crime. Others identified lack of enough vehicles and other facilities to enable the police carry out its activities effectively, while 55 (19%) identified close gap lack of trained and certified people as public relations officers in the police force. This implies that there are several challenges facing the Nigeria Police Force in the application of public relations in managing its image in Adamawa State, as pointed out by respondents.

### Discussion of Findings

The Nigeria Police Force as an organization established by the Federal Government of Nigeria with a constitutional backing to serve members of public has been in the bad news for many years. Stories about police personnel in the media have not been pleasant just as many studies carried out by scholars previously have clearly shown that the organization and its personnel are negatively perceived by the very members of the public the police force is established to serve. The implication of the perceived negative image of the Nigeria Police Force is that its relationship with members of the public is not cordial. This perceived bad relationship between the police and its public is not a good development as it can go a long way in affecting the ability of the police to fight and eliminate crime in Nigeria.

The perceived thorny, unhealthy and unpleasant relationship the police have with members of the public is, therefore, what motivated this study. Specifically, the study seeks to find out whether the police is aware of public relations as a relationship and image management tool (Chiakaan, 2015; Nwosu, 2005). If the Police is aware, does it apply it? If it applies, how does it apply it? Are there challenges the Force faces in its efforts towards applying public relations in managing relationship with its publics and projecting its corporate image in the society? These are the fundamental questions the study has raised and collected data in respect to.

The study, first of all, has collected demographic data of respondents in Table 1. Data collected in this regard have demonstrated that respondents were of different gender, educational, marital and religious backgrounds. The implication is that respondents of various demographic variables brought their knowledge and experiences to bear on the subject matter of the study.

The study makes efforts to establish the fact that the sampled respondents have knowledge of the police force and its application of public relations in managing its image. Data collected in Table

1 have shown that the police apply public relations but to a low or minimal extent. This is the position of 59% of the sampled respondents. Whether the application of public relations is low, the basic thing is that the organization applies public relations in managing relationship with its publics and projecting its image positively.

Since data revealed that the police apply public relations, it becomes important for the study to find out the public relations approaches otherwise referred to as gimmicks, tools, techniques, or tactics (Chiakaan & Chile, 2020; Sambe, 2018; Keghku 2005; Ajala, 2001), being applied. Data in Table 2 have, therefore, revealed that even though the Force applies different public relations tactics, the dominant one appears to be provision of phone numbers to members of the public in Adamawa State to enable them reach them in emergency periods and whenever they find police personnel behaving unprofessionally. This is attested by 34% sampled respondents. On the other hand, 23% respondents have agreed that demonstrating commitment to fighting crime, protecting lives and property in the state is the public relations approach adopted by the police in Adamawa State in managing relationship with its publics and projecting its corporate image. The fact that other tools scored very low is a demonstration that all is not well with the application of public relations by the police in Adamawa State in its relationship management and image projection efforts. This made the study to probe further by asking the way and manner public relations is applied, which is the concern of questions 3.

Data collected in Table 3 in respect to the way and manner public relations is being applied by the Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State, therefore, revealed that the force and its personnel do not apply public relations properly. According to 162 (55%) sampled respondents, even though public relations is applied, it is not professionally applied as expected. Public relations, among all areas of human endeavours, appears to be the most misconstrued (Chiakaan, Tsafa and Idi, 2024; Chiakaan and Chile, 2020; Keghku, 2005; Nwosu, 2005; Ajala, 2001).

Many people misconstrued public relations for propaganda, window dressing and other communication concepts including marketing. If the police misapply public relations, as shown by data in Table 3, it is therefore not surprising; it may be as a result of confusion between what public relations is and what it is not. The implication of misapplying public relations by an organisation is that the cordial relationship which it is expected to have with its publics is always lacking. Public relations is a relationship building and sustaining tool; it is a reputation and image management function. Where public relations is properly managed, as preached by Frank Jefkins' (1988) transfer model, a model upon which this study is anchored, an organization will succeed in changing people's negative attitude towards it to positive; it will succeed in changing people's negative perception about it to positive.

No wonder, data in Table 4 have shown that in spite of the recognition and application of public relations by the police force, 68% of the sampled respondents claimed that people in Adamawa State do not speak positively about the police. This shows that the image of the police in Adamawa State is not positive; it shows deep lack of confidence and trust in the police by the people it is out to serve. This also depicts that there may be some issues or challenges the police is facing in managing relationship with its publics and promoting its image positively through public relations. Data collected in Table 5 therefore, no doubt, identified a number of issues the force is facing in its application of public relations. According to 28%, the major issue is lack of enough vehicles and other facilities; another 28% identified unwillingness by members of the public to collaborate with the police in reporting and fighting crime. According to 25%, the small number of police

officers compare to the large population in Adamawa State is a challenge to the effective application of public relations in managing and projecting its image positively in the state. It is, however, the belief of 19% respondents that lack of trained, certified people as public relations officers in the police is affecting the ability of the police to apply public relations as professionally expected in managing its image effectively in Adamawa State.

### Conclusion

The Nigeria Police Force in Adamawa State is not unaware of the fact that people lack confidence and trust in it, meaning that its image is not very good in their eyes. This awareness makes it to employ the tool of public relations in order to redeem its battered image. Unfortunately, certain factors such as confusion between what modern professional public relations is and what it is not, limited number of police personnel, unwillingness of people to collaborate with the police and shortage of modern tools and so on have affected the force's ability to be effective in the application of public relations in this regard. This implies that the relationship between the police and its publics in the state is still not very cordial as expected as respondents hardly speak positively about the force and its personnel. Fundamentally, public relations have not been effectively applied by the Police Force in managing its image in Adamawa State.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The federal government should recruit more youth into the police force so as to enable it match the large population it is out to serve. ‘
- ii. There is no way the police can perform its task of fighting crime, protecting lives and property effectively without having adequate modern equipment or tools; government should therefore provide the force with enough modern tools that can enable it cope with the rising crimes in Adamawa State and Nigeria as a whole.
- iii. Public relations have since shifted from being a theoretical to a practical profession. As a practical profession, it is proactively inclined; it is concerned about good performance rather than talking or propagandaism. The police force as an organisation should be aware of this and train its personnel accordingly. This therefore requires of the organisation recruiting people with public relations/mass communication background into it.
- iv. Regular training or workshop should be organized for police personnel to educate them on what modern public relations entails.
- v. Public relations as a programme like History, Geography, Sociology and others should be introduced into the curriculum of Police Training institutions in Nigeria.

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