

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN TACKLING INSECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study ascertained public relations and digital technology in tackling insecurity challenges in Nigeria. The situational theory of publics was anchored in this study. This study adopted a qualitative research method using interviews to explore the role of Public Relations (PR) and digital technology in tackling insecurity challenges in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 105 public relations practitioners, security personnel, digital communication experts, and media professionals who are actively involved in security communication and crisis management. Given the nature of qualitative research, the study employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents with relevant expertise and experience. A total of 15 participants were interviewed, including representatives from security agencies, PR firms and digital media organisations. The method of data collection involved semi-structured interviews, allowing respondents to provide detailed responses while also enabling flexibility for follow-up questions. The interviews were conducted in person and via virtual platforms, depending on the availability of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, involving transcription, coding and categorisation of emerging themes related to PR strategies, digital tools, public engagement and security communication challenges. Findings revealed that public relations plays a critical role in security communication by fostering trust between security agencies and the public, managing crisis communication, countering misinformation and encouraging civic engagement through strategic messaging and media partnerships, though challenges such as misinformation and inadequate crisis response mechanisms persist. The study concluded that Public Relations is a vital tool in security communication, as it fosters trust, enhances crisis management, and mitigates misinformation, but its effectiveness depends on timely, transparent and strategic messaging that strengthens public confidence in security agencies. The study recommended that security agencies should adopt proactive Public Relations strategies, including transparent crisis communication and media collaboration, to enhance public trust and engagement in security efforts.

Keywords: Public Relations, Digital Technology, Tackling, Insecurity Challenges, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria has been struggling with deteriorating security challenges such as insurgency, terrorism, banditry and communal violence that have drastically hindered socio-economic growth and eroded national cohesion. The



reaction demands fresh and integrated approaches beyond conventional security thinking. Much more striking, however, has been the cross-fertilisation between public relations (PR) and digital technology to become a key strategy in curbing insecurity around the country. It has been argued by scholars that virtual PR can be utilised in promoting good governance, accountability, and national integration essential in countering insecurity (Aribisala et al., 2023).

Public relations, concerned with managing and disseminating information between organisations and the public, plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and fostering trust. In the context of national security, effective PR strategies can enhance transparency, build public confidence in governmental institutions, and promote collaborative efforts toward peace-building. On the national security front, good PR approaches can help to promote openness, foster public trust in government institutions, and facilitate mass action towards peace construction. For example, the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) in Jos used social media platforms to hold forums, drawing residents and community leaders into conversation towards reconciliation and peace resolution (Peace Pacific Perfection, 2024). This is an example of how PR can lead to conflict resolution and promote community participation in security issues.

At the same time, the pace of innovation in digital technology presents unprecedented possibilities for further enhancing security operations and public participation. Artificial intelligence, autonomous unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or drones), and satellite remote sensing have been recognised as essential elements in contemporary security systems. The Nigerian government realises the need to integrate such technologies in order to increase law enforcement capacity and address security matters in a better way (Pantami, 2021). With the application of digital technology, security organisations are able to track criminality, predict possible security risks, and react more effectively to emergencies.

The collaboration between digital technology and PR offers the immediacy of communication and data-driven decision-making, which is critical in responding to insecurity. Digital media offer immediate dissemination of information, allowing security organizations to quickly alert the public about threats and measures of prevention. This immediacy not only thwarts threats but also discourages the spread of misinformation, which would enflame tensions and undermine security efforts (Garba, 2024). Under the security environment of Nigeria, where rumours have the capability to fuel panic and conflict, PR practice utilising digital technology can assist in regulating public opinion and maintaining proper communication.

Moreover, digital public relations goes further than disseminating information to include actively involving citizens in security campaigns. With social media and other forms of online platforms, PR practitioners can mobilise communities, promote public involvement in surveillance practices, and develop a sense of common responsibility towards securing themselves. Such a participatory mechanism ensures solutions to security become more efficient as well as fosters solidarity and resistance against threats (Ya'u Madobi, 2024). Where communities actively participate in security operations, it can make it easy to gather intelligence and enhance mutual security cooperation.



Nonetheless, the application of digital technology in public relations is not without its issues. Problems like the digital divide, disinformation, and privacy of information are acute challenges to be encountered. Provision of universal access to digital resources is necessary to avoid marginalizing certain classes of individuals, which could inadvertently lead to insecurity. There must also be strong digital literacy initiatives and strict monitoring of digital platforms (Aribisala et al., 2023). These issues present the necessity of government action towards promoting digital inclusivity while keeping ethics in the management of data and security communication in focus.

Albeit under such limitations, the potential gains from joining PR and digital technology in addressing Nigeria's security issues lie ahead. There is one study that examined the government's communication strategy in the security field, prioritizing strategic and foresight PR measures for enhancing institutional confidence and creating sustainable peace (Garba, 2024). Through holistic PR, which is done using online tools, the government can enhance transparency, accountability and trust, which are all essentials of effective security management.

In addition, the use of digital public relations in advocacy to ensure good governance and national integration cannot be overstressed. By using digital platforms for citizen-government interactions, the government provides an opportunity to answer citizens' grievances, provide accurate information, and disseminate policies targeting the causes of insecurity. This helps serve the overall goal of national integration by promoting a feeling of belonging and shared responsibility among groups (Aribisala et al., 2023). PR activities that exercise inclusivity can resolve socio-political tensions, which usually become security issues.

Information technology and public relations are integrated in a robust strategy in tackling Nigeria's security issues. By uniting the advantages of both areas, the government and security outfits can improve communication, get the confidence of the people, and adopt more effective security strategies. Nevertheless, the following obstacles must be overcome in an attempt to realise optimal application of the combined approach. Through constant improvisation and dedication to using digital tools in PR, Nigeria can far make strides toward attaining sustainable security and national harmony.

The relevance of this research is that it addresses the convergence of public relations and technology innovations in addressing Nigeria's security crisis, showing how strategic communication and technological innovations may advance public credibility, promote information exchange in real time, fight disinformation and induce public participation in security issues, resulting in national stability and policy formulation.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is still confronted with severely critical security issues, including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cybercrime and communal violence, which have severally hindered economic growth, social cohesion and national development. Conventional security protocols, such as the deployment of the military and police, have proved inadequate in stemming these threats because criminal networks are always adapting to countermeasures. Additionally, public disillusionment with security agencies, which is fostered through ineffective communication strategies, misinformation and secrecy, contributes to the problem. In such circumstances, the function of public



relations (PR) in fostering effective communication between security agencies and the public is significant. Nonetheless, with the increasing awareness of PR in security management, its use remains under-exploited, specifically, the application of digital technology as a tool of improving communication, public involvement, and crisis management. The lack of an overall strategy integrating PR and ICT towards a response to insecurity is left to counteract effective security reactions.

Also, new technologies have been introduced by digital technology that are capable of re-configuring security communication, intelligence, and crisis response. Social media, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics hold the promise of sharing information in real-time, combating misinformation and mobilising public engagement in security initiatives. But digital divide, misinformation, privacy and cyber threats constitute serious challenges towards executing such potential to the fullest extent. Lacking a well-devised plan that seeks to reconcile PR strategies and digital innovations, there will persist the absence of connection between security agencies and the public, hence the breeding ground for insecurity. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to investigate the role of public relations and digital technology in addressing insecurity concerns in Nigeria, establishing the gaps, challenges and opportunities towards their effective implementation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of public relations in addressing insecurity challenges in Nigeria.
2. To assess how digital technology enhances security communication and public engagement.
3. To identify the challenges and opportunities in integrating public relations and digital technology for tackling insecurity in Nigeria.

The Role of Public Relations in Building National Security

Public Relations (PR) is important in national security by facilitating greater security agencies' people communication. It builds trust, crisis management and cooperation in security. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), PR is an organisational communication process that creates mutual knowledge between an organisation and its publics. In national security, PR must be used in communication of accurate information, deconstruction of misinformation and imposition of public cooperation with security policies. This is especially true in Nigeria, where public suspicion of security agencies is largely caused by misinformation and secrecy (Nwosu & Egbuchulam, 2021).

In addition, PR techniques can also be employed in promoting people's participation in security activities. Through town hall meetings, media campaigns and social media, security agencies can engage the public, hear their complaints and facilitate participation in gathering intelligence. This is similar to the situational theory of publics, a strategy that focuses on participative participation in solving social problems (Grunig, 1992). In Nigeria, where security issues are paramount, such participative PR strategies can induce citizen participation with security agencies, bridging security gaps (Akinwale, 2020).

Nonetheless, PR effectiveness in national security largely relies on the credibility of information provided. Poor crisis communication, propaganda, and disinformation can undermine public trust and consequently the

effectiveness of security interventions. Ethical PR practices like transparency and truthfulness in communication, as contended by Wilcox et al. (2013), are essential for upholding public confidence. This is especially the case in Nigeria, with citizens being quick to assume that government-driven security initiatives are manipulative, as they have been dissatisfied with disinformation from authorities in the past (Ekeanyanwu & Okorie, 2019).

In spite of all these challenges, PR is still an effective means of solving Nigeria's security problems. The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC, 2023) has recognised the effectiveness of strategic communication in solving security problems and has called on government agencies to integrate PR into security policies. Through the application of PR, security agencies can enhance public image, information dissemination, and cooperation on national security.

Digital Technology: Transforming Public Relations Practices

The arrival of digital technology has transformed PR by providing new channels of communication that allow real-time interaction with the public. Social media, data science and artificial intelligence have made PR professionals more effective in creating messages that are appealing to their audience. Macnamara (2016) argued that digital PR allows for direct interaction with stakeholders, and hence crisis management and influencing the perception of the public is facilitated. In Nigeria, private organizations and public agencies increasingly use online sources to engage citizens on issues of security (Okoro & Nwafor, 2022).

The digital technology also supports focused communication through the possibility of personalizing messages to targeted groups. For instance, algorithms of social media enable security agencies to send security alerts to people in targeted areas, which enhances the response. This is in accordance with agenda-setting theory, which posits that the media have the potential to influence what the population deems as important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In Nigeria, internet PR has served a critical part in advancing publicity for security concerns, for example, insurgency and cybercrime (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2021).

Although it has its benefits, online PR is challenged by the quick dissemination of misinformation and cyber-attacks. The prevalence of fabricated news on social media has bred doubt in the times of security crises, even feeding conflict. Misinformation, as argued by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), will distort public opinion and erase trust in institutions. It is a matter of concern in Nigeria, with unverified news having the tendency to spread faster than official notices, thereby posing challenges to PR practitioners to control the narrative (Ekeanyanwu, 2020).

Nevertheless, electronic PR is a useful tool in the evolution of security communication in Nigeria. Scholars like Kent and Taylor (2002) believe that two-way communication models have to be employed, where the PR practitioners have two-way conversations with stakeholders. By applying social media, websites, and mobile apps, security agencies can promote their communication policy and win more public trust in security measures (NCC, 2023).

Integrating Public Relations and Digital Technology to Combat Insecurity in Nigeria

The intersection of PR with digital technology provides a potent method towards the mitigation of Nigeria's security issues. On digital platforms, PR professionals can counter misinformation, interact with the public and establish security consciousness. According to Coombs (2012), crisis communication needs to be proactive, open,



and technology-based in order to function. With security being an issue in Nigeria, security organs can use PR to counter rumours and update on security situations in real time (Okoro & Agbese, 2021).

Apart from that, digital PR facilitates data-driven decision-making since it enables security agencies to measure public opinion and modify their communication plan to suit their needs. Social listening capabilities like sentiment analysis and artificial intelligence-powered monitoring facilitate public opinion examination and identify new security threats. This is consonant with the uses and gratifications theory, which holds that individuals deliberately seek information congruent with their purposes (Katz et al., 1974). In Nigeria, security agencies have begun adopting such technologies to monitor public sentiments concerning security matters (Egbunike, 2022).

All these concerns of cyber-attacks, misinformation and public mistrust get in the way of the proper use of PR and digital technology in security management. Problems of cyber-security, more than anything else, make it difficult for agencies to exchange sensitive information without worrying about compromised data. Olayemi (2021) recognises that technology improves communication but makes organisations vulnerable to cyber-attacks. The threat can only be overcome by having strict cyber-security measures and ensuring public relations professionals are sufficiently trained in digital crisis communication (NCC, 2023).

To obtain the best impact of the integration of PR and digital technology towards reducing insecurity, Nigerian security institutions need to come up with well-defined policies and invest in capacity development. Equipping PR practitioners with digital crisis management skills and using ethical communication can help build the public's trust in security institutions. By adopting effective integration of PR practices with digital technologies, Nigeria can enhance its security communication and stabilize the country (Akinwale, 2020).

Situational Theory of Publics

This has been proposed by James E. Grunig in 1983. Situational Theory of Publics illustrates how various groups (publics) react to communication messages depending on the degree of awareness and engagement in an issue. The theory divides audiences into four broad groups: Non-publics- People who are not concerned or uninformed about an issue. Latent publics- People who are impacted by an issue but are unaware of it. Aware publics- They are aware that there is a problem but are doing nothing about it. Active publics- They are aware and working actively towards resolving an issue.

Theory assumes that individuals engage in communications and problem-solving activities based on three conditions: Problem recognition – The extent to which people are aware of the problem as applicable to them. Constraint recognition – Perceived obstacles in resolving the problem. Level of involvement – The degree to which individuals feel a part of the issue. Assumptions of the Theory, individuals do not respond to communication messages in an identical manner; they respond based on their level of awareness and how interested they are. Active publics are information seekers and problem solvers, whereas passive publics reject or disregard messages. Successful communication efforts must take into account the awareness and involvement level of the audience.



It presumes publics to always and necessarily be rational to communication, disregarding emotion or culture. It fails to consider the full effect of misinformation, social media algorithms, or online manipulation on publics' opinions. The model does not consider why individuals are passive even when they perceive a problem to be significant. Situational theory of publics is very relevant in this research since it describes why various groups of individuals react to security communication programs in Nigeria. Public Relations (PR) and emerging technology can be utilised strategically to turn latent and aware publics into active publics who are involved in security programs. Problem Identification: Nigerians know there are security issues but perhaps not fully aware of their role in preventing them.

Public relations campaigns will raise awareness and education. Constraint Identification: Lack of public trust, fear, and ignorance of security organisations may deter the public from involving themselves in security programs. Online PR boasts of overcoming this constraint by openness in communication. Level of Involvement: Through the employment of online platforms as well as PR practice, security organisations have been able to promote reporting of suspicious behaviour, exchange verified security intelligence and also engage citizens actively in grassroots-based security programs. Following application of this theory, the study clarifies how PR and online technology can be harnessed for mobilising public engagement in managing Nigeria's security problems.

Empirical Review

Okoro & Agbese (2021) conducted a study on *Digital Public Relations in Security Communication*. This study investigated how digital public relations can enhance security communication in Nigeria. The study employed a mixed-method study that utilized surveys and social media pages of government security agencies content analysis. The study revealed that digital PR, particularly social media, enhances significantly public engagement and trust in security agencies. Misinformation and low digital literacy among citizens nevertheless curtail utilization at full capacity. Both the pioneer study and current reviewed study concern the position of digital PR in heightening Nigeria's security communication. Whereas the reviewed study placed at the centre of attention digital PR on social media websites, the current study brings together both PR and digital technology except social media sites to address insecurity.

Egbunike (2022) had carried out the research on *The Role of Digital Media in Public Safety Communication*. This research measured the efficacy of digital media in public safety communication in Nigeria. This research used a qualitative research with interviewing between security communication professionals and media analysts. The study discovered that online media platforms, that is, Twitter and WhatsApp have a critical role to play in the dissemination of security information but also that they are prone to abuse through misinformation. Both the study under review and the current study highlight the contribution of digital platforms to security communication. Although the study under review focused predominantly on digital media, the current study explores the combined contribution of PR and digital technology to managing insecurity.

Akinwale (2020) carried out a study on *Public Relations Strategies in Security Communication: A Nigerian Perspective*. The study evaluated the effectiveness of PR strategies to build public confidence in security agencies.



The study employed a case study approach comparing PR efforts of the Nigerian Police and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Based on the study, it was showed that well-organized PR campaigns help in building public opinion about security agencies. But lack of consistency and transparency usually mar such efforts. The reviewed study and this current study speak of the contribution of PR in framing security communication. The reviewed study dwelled on PR strategies only, and this current study introduces digital technology as another vehicle to address insecurity.

Gap Identification

In spite of the number of research studies on public relations (PR) and the new technology across different fields, there remains a huge knowledge gap concerning their combined input towards resolving security issues in Nigeria. Past research works like Okoro and Agbese (2021) and Egbunike (2022) have investigated digital PR within the context of security communication but these works are concerned with the application of social media alone without examining how other wider digital technologies like artificial intelligence, big data analytics and cyber-security tools might be utilized in PR activities for national security. In addition, though Akinwale (2020) studied PR strategies in security administration, the research did not take into account the changing nature of digital sites to shape public opinion and mobilize citizen action. Moreover, there is limited literature on how PR strategies can be customised to counter misinformation and lack of trust, which are the greatest hindrances to quality security communication in Nigeria. This research seeks to fill these silences by critically analysing the complementary function of PR and information technology in security management, focusing on their applications in the real world to counter misinformation, boost citizen participation and trust in security institutions.

Methodology

The research employed qualitative research with the aid of interviews to investigate the contribution of Public Relations (PR) and information technology in addressing insecurity problems in Nigeria. The population under consideration consisted 105 public relations professionals, security officers, experts in digital communication, and journalists who are directly engaged in security communication and crisis management. Because qualitative research is being applied, the study employed a purposive sampling strategy in selecting participants with relevant experience and expertise. The researchers interviewed 15 participants, representing security agency members, PR agencies and digital media firms. The number of participants is deemed sufficient to obtain in-depth information about the convergence of digital technology and PR in security management.

The data collection method was by semi-structured interviews so that the respondents give in-depth answers as well as leave room for probing. The interviews were either face-to-face or virtually depending on the availability of participants. Thematic analysis was applied in analysing the data, such as transcription, coding and categorization of emerging themes on PR tactics, digital tools, public participation, and security communication challenges. This method guarantees thorough comprehension of how PR and digital technology are applied to enhance security communication and public trust. Ethical standards, such as confidentiality and informed consent, were respected in research.



Data Presentation and Analysis

Themes were drawn deductively from research objectives. The themes deduced included: The contribution of public relations towards security communication; Digital technology as a means of improving security awareness; and challenges and prospects in PR and digital technology integration towards security management. These were articulated and elaborated below:

The Role of Public Relations in Security Communication: This is a study of how PR practice is applied in managing security information, establishing public trust, and initiating cooperation between security organs and the public. Respondent 1 (PR Professional) stated that: “Public Relations is essential in shaping the perception of the public and establishing trust between security institutions and the public at large. PR experts craft crisis communication plans to enable timely release and open disclosure of information related to security. For instance, during times of increased insecurity, PR professionals in security organizations design communications that are comforting to the public but also offer secure advice. Successful PR campaigns assist in limiting panic and misinformation, which is rampant with security crises.”

Respondent 2 (Security Personnel): PR, from the security agency's point of view, “is crucial in shaping the people's expectations and involvement. Through press releases, media briefings, and community relations programs, security agencies highlight their activities and successes, hence building credibility. Among our biggest challenges is the propagation of false information and disinformation, which primarily tarnishes the people's trust in our activities. That is why PR activities must encompass pre-emptive fact-checking and real-time communication to defuse disinformation.”

Respondent 3 (Media Professional) illustrated that: “Media serves as a bridge between security and public agencies, and PR activities aid in constructing and communicating security messages. For example, while security agencies reach media individuals via PR-based media associations, security reports are believed. But even then, no connection exists between crisis communications because certain security agencies do not offer updates at the right time, thereby, cultivating gossip and dis-belief. Strengthening PR mechanisms may mitigate this.”

Respondent 4 (Digital PR Specialist) agreed that: “Security communication is changing with the adoption of digital communications. Media briefings are now being followed with live reporting on social media. PR is being utilised by security agencies to address citizens directly and have them report suspicious behaviour and share real information. Cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, however, need security agencies to continually fine-tune their digital PR strategies.”

Digital Technology as a Tool for Enhancing Security Awareness: This segment explores the role which digital platforms, e.g., social media, artificial intelligence, and big data analytics play in sharing security information and engaging the public in security operations. Respondent 1 (Cybersecurity Expert) narrated that: “Security communication has undergone tremendous transformation with the use of digital technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data analytics are some of the mechanisms used to track patterns of crime and predict possible security threats. Security personnel currently utilize computerized observation systems to track and



respond to threats in real time. For instance, AI-based surveillance systems monitor social media for offensive posts and notify the authorities, with faster response time.”

Respondent 2 (Social Media Analyst) elicited that: “Social media are currently central instruments in security communication. Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp are platforms used to release security warnings and response protocols. At the time of crisis, real-time data on such platforms assist with managing the narrative and countering disinformation. The challenge is the dissemination of misinformation, which tends to trigger panic and alarmism. Security agencies need to enhance digital literacy among citizens so as to enhance the credibility of digital security communication.”

Respondent 3 (Technology Developer) pointed out that: “Online platforms and applications on mobile devices have also contributed significantly to elevating security awareness. Citizens are able to report suspicious transactions anonymously through applications such as 'Tracka' and 'Nigerian Police Alert'. Two-way interaction of citizens with security agencies through digital technology improves collection of intelligence from citizens. Nevertheless, low internet penetration in rural regions limits the potency of digital security tools. Closing the gap is crucial for a broad-based security policy.”

Respondent 4 (Expert in Digital Policy) said that: “Although digital technology is promoting security awareness, there are issues of privacy breaches and interceptions of information. Use of digital surveillance technology should be weighed against the protection of the rights of citizens. Digital security devices need to be controlled in government regulations without impeding access to information by the general public. Digital technology, with proper management, will promote greater participation of the public in security awareness and crime prevention.”

Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating PR and Digital Technology for Security Management: This is the theme that describes the challenges to successful implementation of PR and digital technology in security communication, as well as possible solutions and best practices for enhanced security performance in Nigeria. Respondent 1 (Government Official) stated that: “One of the biggest challenges is a lack of coordination between PR practitioners and security agencies in digital communication management. Most security agencies are still dependent on conventional PR practices and lag behind in embracing digital methods. This lag impacts the effectiveness of security messages. But as we spend more money on digital PR training for security personnel, we can close this gap.”

Respondent 2 (Cyber Security Specialist) highlighted that: “Cyber-attacks are a significant threat to digital security communication. Misinformation agents and hackers use digital channels to distribute misinformation that causes confusion and lack of trustworthiness. The security agencies need to put in place sophisticated cyber-security systems to protect digital PR campaigns. Fortunately, there are prospects of online tracking of security mechanisms that make it possible to have early warning and prevention of threats.”

Respondent 3 (Media Consultant) illustrated that: “The limitation is restricted access to digital infrastructure in rural regions. Though digital communication on security is present in urban regions, most rural communities are



still word-of-mouth communities or traditional media-dependent. Increasing internet coverage and mobile network activities will extend coverage to all citizens with security information. Digital media such as radio-based mobile applications can also fill this gap in communities with poor internet coverage.”

Respondent 4 (PR and Crisis Communication Expert) explained that: “The opportunity in embracing PR and digital technology towards security management is vast. With digital storytelling, security institutions can localize their activities, gaining the trust of the public. Engaging content like security awareness videos and actual crime prevention situational scenarios can be more impactful towards citizens compared to classical press releases. Security institutions of the future need to embrace digital PR technologies to enhance transparency and public cooperation towards insecurity management.”

Discussion of Findings

The research established that, public relations has a key role to play in security communication via building public trust with security institutions, crisis management communication, combating disinformation and stimulating the engagement of citizens via strategic communication and media alliances, despite disinformation and inadequate crisis response mechanisms being ongoing challenges. Akinwale's (2020) research on Public Relations and Crisis Communication in Security Management confirms that PR creates public trust and counters misinformation as it proved that effective PR activities immensely enhance security organizations' credibility and increase the degree of public cooperation in crises, although procrastination in communication undermines its success. Situational Theory of Publics (Grunig, 1983) corroborated this fact by the way in which various publics - latent, aware and active react towards security communication depending on the degree of problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement, establishing again PR strategies as pivotal to forming public opinion, generating confidence and motivating civic action in security issues. The study implies that Public Relations efforts among security agencies should be reinforced to foster public confidence, crisis communication, and countering disinformation, with the ultimate implications that proactive PR engagement, media collaboration, and candid dialogue can boost public collaboration with security initiatives.

The study found that digital technology, especially social media, artificial intelligence and mobile security apps have enhanced security awareness and reaction in Nigeria by means of real-time communication, citizen reporting and crime pattern analysis but are negated by digital illiteracy, the spread of misinformation and low internet penetration in rural communities. The study of Okoro and Agbese (2021) on Social Media and Security Communication in Nigeria corroborates this study's findings that social media raises awareness of security in real-time and citizen participation, citing the fact that social media has become a vital source of security information as mis/disinformation and illiteracy on the digital environment pose significant challenges. This finding is supported by the theory in how it demonstrates that new digital technology boosts problem awareness and participation through delivering real-time security information, allowing direct public-security agency communication, and supporting interactive crisis communication, thus transforming latent and aware publics into active participants in security initiatives. The implication of the results is that security response and awareness



have been transformed by digital technology, so there should be increased investment in digital literacy, fact-checking infrastructure availability and internet access, especially, in the rural areas will enhance digital security communication in Nigeria.

The research, which enumerated some of the major hindrances to PR convergence with digital technology for security management as cyber-security threats, inadequate digital infrastructure and ineffective coordination between PR professionals and security agencies, also enumerated opportunities like real-time monitoring, interactive security communication and digital storytelling as effective change agents towards enhanced transparency and public engagement in security programs. The above evidence is also supported by Egbunike (2022) research on Digital Public Relations and Security Strategies in Nigeria, which highlighted PR and digital tool integration as a new but under-researched security management approach, showing how digital PR enhances openness and citizens' engagement but lacks effective cyber-security measures and inefficient interagency collaboration. The theory also validated such evidence by indicating that perceptions of constraint such as misinformation, cyber-security threat, and digital illiteracy impact public engagement in security communication, highlighting the need for PR strategies and digital channels to overcome such obstacles and increase public engagement in national security initiatives. The research evidence indicated that while the combination of PR and digital technology presents enormous opportunities for enhancing security management, addressing issues like cyber-security threats, poor inter-agency coordination and low infrastructure is essential in an effort to achieve maximum potential for digital PR prospects in national security programs.

Conclusion

The research concluded that Public Relations plays a vital role in security communication as it builds trust, improves crisis management and reduces misinformation only when there are live, open and strategic communications that build public confidence in security institutions.

The research validated that digital technology significantly improves security awareness and response in the aspect of enabling real-time information exchange and citizen engagement, despite being repelled by challenges such as disinformation, digital illiteracy, and limited access to the internet for it to have greatest effect.

The research established that although integration of PR with digital technology opens boundless possibilities to strengthen security management, its success depends on overcoming weak cyber-security frameworks, inadequate infrastructure and poor coordination among security agencies and PR professionals.

This research adds to the knowledge that exists by further elucidating what has been known regarding how Public Relations (PR) and digital technology can be strategically utilized to maximize security communication and management in Nigeria. In contrast to previous studies that individually examined PR approaches or digital technology in crisis communication, the current study provides an extensive investigation of their joint influence on reducing security issues. It emphasizes the importance of PR in building public trust, challenging misinformation and increasing transparency of security communications, and how new media like mobile apps, social media, and artificial intelligence are expanding real-time communication and public participation in



security programs. Through its integration of classic PR practices with visionary cyber security technologies, this research sets a new standard for best-security communications, defined by the necessity of anticipatory media relations, crisis communication plans and cyber-literacy efforts.

Besides, the research contributes to knowledge by creating a sense of immense challenges and opportunities in employing PR and digital technology in security management, and specifically that of Nigeria. It calls for inter-agency coordination, cyber-security infrastructure and capacity, and technology in filling digital security communication gaps. Additionally, research results guide policy-making in the form of evidence-based advice to security agencies, PR practitioners and policymakers on how to improve public involvement in security communication. Through blending theoretical understanding from the Situational Theory of Publics, the research creates a model of public involvement in security communication, and thus leaves room for further studies on the changing nexus between PR, technology and national security.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the work, the following has been proposed.

- 1) Security agencies must embrace proactive Public Relations measures, such as open crisis communication and cooperation with media, to build public trust and participation in security activities.
- 2) The security apparatus and the government must invest in digital literacy training, fact-checking tools and better internet connectivity to ensure maximum utilization of digital security messages.
- 3) Cyber-security mechanisms must be fortified, collaboration between agencies enhanced and digital infrastructure increased to make the most out of the integration of PR and digital technology in security management.

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