

**AN ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES IN REBRANDING NIGERIA  
POLICE IMAGE: A STUDY OF RIVERS STATE POLICE COMMAND**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study assessed public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image: a study of Rivers State police command. Part of the objectives of the study are to; ascertain the unethical practices performed by the Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image, find out the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police especially in Rivers State, examine the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image, etc. The study employed the stakeholders and attitude change theories for the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A sample size of 400 was purposively and randomly drawn from the population using Taro Yamene's formula as a guide. A population of 3,540 stands as the current staff strength of Rivers State police command. The multistage sampling technique was used. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data were tabulated and analyzed using four point likert criterion mean. The findings revealed that the unethical practices of the Nigeria police force were extortion and bribery, engaging in brutality of innocent civilians, unlawful arrest and detention and extra-judicial killings. It also indicated that the Nigeria police force has the statutory role of protecting lives and properties, maintaining law and order, prevention of crimes and apprehension of criminals. The findings also showed that the Nigeria police force Rivers State command employed press releases, press conferences, media relations, event sponsorship and stakeholder meetings were used to rebrand its battered image and they were successful. The study revealed that the challenges that faced Rivers State police command were poor funding, bureaucratic bottlenecks, poor experience and skills, political interference and poor modern communication technology equipment. It was concluded that public relations techniques play a pivotal role in maintaining, building, sustaining and appealing to the public to see the Nigeria police force as a change organisation with the mandate to remove the bad eggs in the system and punish offenders so as to repose public confidence in the Nigeria police and in the long run change the negative narrative about the Nigerian police. The study however recommended that Nigeria police force management board should train and retrain their personnel to imbibe sound ethical standards, fund and provide adequate equipment for them for optimal performance.*

**Keywords: Assessment, public relations techniques, rebranding, image, Rivers State Police Command**

**INTRODUCTION**

In any organisation, there is often the growing need to maintain a good image due to divergent and important factors. One of such factors or reasons is that no organisation can satisfy its numerous publics without being perceived first, by the publics as trusted and dependable. The dependability of the organisation depends on the degree of the comfort given to the publics coupled with her goodwill. Reputation, profitability and the continued existence of any organisation is often dependent on the degree to which its targeted public supports its goals and policies (Pearson Education, 2012). This is true with respect to both public and private organisations as the public is a key stakeholder and decides whether to patronise one or jettison it (as the case may be). Omale (2007) lends credence to the foregoing that the corporate image of an organisation forms a strong

marketing communication and enhances public patronage. The results of this could encourage high patronage for business entities and bolstered relationships in case of others.

In Nigeria just like other parts of the world, individuals, institutions and organisations today are understandably concerned with managing their corporate image – a situation that paints the picture that there is a strong positive correlation between how people perceive an organisation and the pro-corporate supportive behaviour. It has been observed that organisational image management play a significant role in the overall performances of most organisations. In the view of Adeniji, Osinbajo, Abiodun & Oni-Ojo (2015), the recognition of the importance of a favourable organisational image has likewise made organisational image management a widely studied topic within the field of communication. This also relates to the realisation that every organisation has its image – regardless of whether the organisation does anything about it or not. Adeniji et al. (2015) further state that organisation's image is formed based on the stakeholders' perceptions of specific company actions as well as associated industry and national issues. At the same time, an organisation's image to a large extent influence stakeholder's reaction to specific corporate actions and products.

A battered image can be seen as an ill-wind that blows nobody good. In Nigeria, one institution with a battered image is the police, and the situation was exacerbated by way of response by "the people" to different reported cases of abuse against officers and men of the police force in the country. According to Duhe (2019) success is tied to a strong reputation and then its bounds extend beyond that of the audience. For instance, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) by virtue of the poor image and perception gained through extra-judicial executions may have attracted the attention of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) domiciled elsewhere in the world other than Nigeria.

An example was when the Nigeria security forces which include the NPF were accused by Amnesty International of killing over 115 persons in South East of the country within a period of four months (Amnesty International, 2021; Reuters, 2021). There is a danger associated with such bad publicity – as an organisation or institution often becomes the figure of public scrutiny.

It can be clearly stated that bad publicity attracts more attention which could paint a negative image and by extension poor perception from the people within and outside of Nigeria. Considering bad publicity that the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has managed to attract over the years, coupled with the issues surrounding the #EndSARS protests of 2020, the force needed serious reputation management and image building efforts.

The origin of Nigeria Police Force (NPF) organizational behaviour was traced from socially responsible activities of enforcing law and order, protecting lives and properties, detecting crimes, restricting crimes, investigating crimes and controlling unwanted criminal behaviours in the society. Police tendency to reduce the trend of criminal activities in Rivers State was not different from the original intention that called for the fundamental existence of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in Lagos Colony, Niger Coast Constabulary and Calabar protectorate in Nigeria.

Essentially, the Nigerian Police Force began with a thirty-member consular guard formed in Lagos Colony in 1861 and in 1878 a group of 1,200 armed paramilitary members was instituted to ensure more proactive security of lives and property (Armstrong, 1982). On an enlarged scale, Hausa constabulary was formed, while the Lagos police force in 1896 was also established with the core intention to promote life security (Sen, 1999). Within this context, a similar force was also formed in Niger Coast Constabulary and Calabar in 1989 under the newly proclaimed Niger Coast protectorate after which the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were therefore proclaimed in the early 1900s (Chukwuma, 2001).

However, in the 1960s, under the first republic, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was first recognized and nationalized to perform conventional police function. On this note, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was considered responsible for the general internal security of Nigeria. Significantly, the NPF was subjected to the general operational and administrative control of an Inspector General Police (IGP) as appointed by the President to maintain law and order in the country (Chukwuma, 2001).

The development of the Nigeria Police Force was therefore given a serious sense of value for security reasons. The general consideration of this responsibility seems to go out of hand in the recent past decade following the exponential increase in the level of crime associated with unwanted criminal related behaviours of members of the organization. The security of human life and property seems to be abused based on what appears to be dysfunctional management practices in the system. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was therefore observed to experience endemic problems with methods of recruiting, training, promotion, job performance and pattern of discipline which no longer appears to be operated on moral and ethical justification. This implies that the system seems to lack merits of responsible value, not employing professional ethics and expertise in specialized fields with disciplinary measures to ensure proper enforcement of law and order, as well as ensuring security of life and property in the society. The need for assessment of police performance is particularly crucial in a developing country like Nigeria where we have new but simultaneously burgeoning social problems whose nature, patterns, and management demand more proactive new strategies and internationally accepted norms and ethical values. The personnel concerned with these problems are relatively new and inexperienced in some situations where a myriad of needs for life security become a very scarce resource with numerous problems. This attempts to relate that there is no longstanding concern for research and professional competence to guide police related policies (Igbिनovia, 2022).

Similarly, the problem of crime in Nigeria has shown a serious state of concern as connected with insecurity situation hinged on the fact that the official statistical figure of death rate in many states, kidnappings, banditries, armed robbery, ripping, child trafficking, ritual killings, financial exploitations, economic exploitation and other social vices in Nigeria seem to be an epileptic national scourge that has ravaged the social and life security of the nation. The problem was considered to have been associated with a fast-growing rate of uncontrolled criminal activities and unwanted police compromise with related criminal activities in Nigeria. This was traced to a minimal level of improper regulation of police service in the society. Without doubt, this situation tends to explain why people with great wealth resorted to hiring private security men or security officers, which was hitherto improper and unethical by moral measurement of social protection standards. The life and property of the poor were no longer considered secure in the country.

To be more exact, the Nigeria Police Force security service meant for the protection of lives and properties has not only been ineffective but also poisonous for the wellbeing of the poor in the society. In addition, the crime situation and the confidence people have in the police, especially in the prevention, detection, investigation and control of crime seems to lack considerable valued merits. In line with this reality, the attitude or behaviour of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) as an organization appears to have been driven by unguided operational principles considered ineffective to restrain dysfunctional criminal related working behaviours of the police organization (Creswell, 2009). Coupled with this is the fact that most people dread the police and, as a result, they will do anything possible to avoid talking about unchecked terrible attitudes just to ensure that they do not have any dealing with the police. This adds meaning to the truth that corruption among members of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) seems to have become institutionalized by policemen at checkpoints and in their offices, where they collect money unashamedly in the full glare from criminals, passengers and other road users.

Similarly, the trend of corruption, dishonesty and indiscipline among members of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) was widespread in the system, engendering a low level of public confidence that resorted to self-help among Nigeria citizens. Police were more adept at paramilitary operations and exercise of force in the 80s to 90s than what is being experienced at the community service functions recently concerning crime prevention, crime detection, crime investigation, crime control and adoption of appropriate punitive measures (Igwe, 2023),

In view of this, members of the public have raised some dissatisfying alerts, complaining against the observed gross rate of indiscipline in the Nigerian Police Force job performance (Akpan, 2020).

Many people attribute the causes of police inefficient performance and increase in crime rate to gross rate of indiscipline in the leadership management approach to police involvement in unethical practices, tribalism and god-fatherism in the system. Chukwuma (2024) opined that “the problem of indiscipline, as associated with the performance of the Nigeria Police Force and increase in crime rate, has brought the attention of the researchers in this study to public security as the police personnel functions of reducing crime rate and management of social security hazards that affects the wellbeing of the society”. It is on this backdrop that this study assess the public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police force image in Rivers State command.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Public relations play a unique role in laundering the battered image of any institution. Contemporary events may not project the Nigeria police force especially the Rivers State command as haven the reputation and public confidence, trust, credibility of the general public in terms of crime detection, prevention, protection of lives and properties, maintainance of law and order in the state. This perception and narrative if not changed by the Nigeria police force, may spell doom for the Nigerian security outfit and may hamper on its effectiveness in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities without fear or favour. Nigeria police force has been accused of extortion of money from motorist at different checkpoints in Port Harcourt, engage in unlawful and detention of innocent citizens, engage in extrajudicial killings and brutality of innocent citizens. It becomes imperative that the Nigerian police force especially Rivers State police command if it does not use effective public relations strategies to address this trend and public dissatisfaction it may affect its level of statutory responsibilities and relationship with the people. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police force image with a focus on Rivers State police command.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to assess public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image: A study of Rivers State police command. However, the objectives seek to;

- i. ascertain the unethical practices performed by Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image.
- ii. find out the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police force especially in Rivers State.
- iii. examine the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in Rebranding Nigeria police image.
- iv. ascertain the level of effectiveness of the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image.
- v. determine the attendant challenges Rivers State police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image.

### **Research Questions**

These following questions were formulated to guide the study;

- i. What are the unethical practices performed by Nigeria police in Rivers State that jeopardize its image?
- ii. What are the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police force especially in Rivers State?
- iii. What are the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image?
- iv. What is the level of effectiveness of the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image?
- v. What are the attendant challenges Rivers State police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image?

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Nigeria Police Organizational Conducts towards Crime Detection and Trend of Robbery Activities**

Police crime detection activities and the trend of armed robbery reduction in Rivers State is observed to have been driven by actions generated from the citizens' reaction. The citizens' state of satisfaction and interest in police behaviour is a motivated evidence of crime reduction and control. In view of this, police crime detection activities and the trend of armed robbery reduction is determined by the extent to which police organizational behaviour has been rated in the society. Reiner (2017) relates that police job performance has been rated low by citizens. This unfolds the reality that the behaviour of the police appears to have partially addressed the issue of crime detection and control in Rivers State. Thus, the state of criminal activity in the country could also be determined by the citizens' reaction and state of satisfaction on the quality of service provided by the police. The police organizational behaviour and crime detection activities are associated with the trend of armed robbery in the society. Thus, reduction in the trend of armed robbery and the citizens' satisfaction in police behaviour could be established based on the extent to which the police service was able to meet up the citizens' expectations.

In this situation, the reduction in the trend of armed robbery practice is a motivator of the citizens' interest in police performance. Therefore, the effort to enhance the relationship between police organizational behaviour and crime detection activities is evidence of proactive attitude expressed in a responsible manner (Taraylor, 2019). In line with this, David & Morgan (2016) define the relationship between police organizational behaviour and crime detection as a function of crime prevention and control, which influences the citizens' action and reaction towards police behaviour. The citizens' action and reaction towards armed robbery practice and police organizational behaviour depends upon the outcome of police activity towards crime in the society. This adds meaning to the belief that any action that guides or influences the citizen against crime requires an alternative action against criminal activities as needed to reduce crime by the police. The intention to view police behaviour as a sensitive effort of reducing armed robbery practice tends to justify the degree of the citizens' satisfaction in police activities (Oko, (2018). On a large scale, Nigeria police appears not to resolve the fundamental challenges inherent in the use of its traditional organizational behaviour to assess its organizational performance (Dumadi & Koateh, 2015).

In addition, it considered vital to police officers that are concerned with the issue of irresponsible behaviour to impact positively on a police organization that operates and fulfills its activities in the safety of the society's wellbeing and the property. This current context therefore enhanced few measures of what might indicate evidence of failure towards achieving the expected progress in policing goals. This was not only remarkable concerning how the police handle crime in the society, but also how police organizations handle criminal behaviours amongst police officers and ordinary criminals in the society. This may actually be antithetical as noticed in government reactions to the situation and the public desire. The practice of observing police organizational behaviour according to organizational goals was driven by the extent to which police officers respond to issues of robbery activities. Undoubtedly, the citizens believe that a different approach to police organization behavioural performance measurement is required to determine the extent to which people are more attuned to the expectations of local stakeholders.

#### **Nigeria Police Force and Utilization of Public Relations Techniques in Rebranding its Image**

**Communication** – serves as the basis for control and coordination in organisations or nations – and also provides information essential to effective completion of national mission. Anatusi (2013)

defines communication as the exchange of symbols or verbal symbols (oral and written) that uses words or pictures. By virtue of the foregoing, communication can come in form of newsletters, flyers, news releases, brochures, direct mail, advertising, themes, slogans, the World Wide Web (www), and other initiatives that use words and language. The public's perception of credibility and validity is largely dependent on the successful transmission of verbal and non-verbal messages and the sharing of information at all links through the appropriate channels. The objective of influencing public opinion, changing or forming a new one can only be achieved through good and effective public relations. That way, hostility could be turned into friendship thereby resolving the conflict occasioned by corruption, misunderstanding and misconception. Public relations officers or practitioners can exploit NPF's potentials by building on existing structures to entrench understanding with the Nigerian public and rebuild a favourable image.

**Propaganda** – can be seen as activities that involve disseminating information and ideas specifically towards intensifying or inducing specific actions and attitudes (Bhasin, 2019; Smith, 2021). Though, it is often thought that propaganda is false or misleading (Sinha, 2020), such line of thought or view is relative, even though some propagandists may intentionally distort fact but others may present it as faithfully as objective observers. However, the essential distinction lies in the intentions of the propagandist to persuade an audience to adopt the attitude or action he or she espouses. Propaganda is a powerful strategy that public relations use to influence behaviour or public opinions. It can be used positively in promoting the image of the country. However, with the circumstances of the lingering distrust between the Nigerian public and its police force, propaganda as a PR tool may not be the best strategy to repairing a battered image.

**Lobby Groups** – by its traditional meaning refers to a group of persons joined together by a common purpose whose major function is to influence politicians and other public officers (Chen, 2020). Such groups claim to represent a particular interest and, therefore, should be established to influence government policy, corporate or public opinion. When a lobby group hides its true purpose and support base, it is known as a front group (Pietracatella & Brady, 2020). However, there is a connection or relationship between lobbying, PR and advocacy (Berg, 2009). Therefore, lobby can equally be used by public relations in order to sway public opinion or perception both within and outside the country to create good image. In the same vein, the NPF can also take advantage of this across several fronts.

**Exhibitions and Expositions** – are public displays of industrial or commercial products (Smit, 2012). Whereas exhibitions are a display of such products or arts for a short period, expositions are organised and often take a longer period and usually on a larger scale when compared to the former. The scope of both exhibitions and expositions may be regional, national or international – and such occasions can be explored to expose the traditional ways of life preserved in local customs, varied handicrafts and native arts and lifestyle of Nigeria in particular and Africa in generally. Relatedly, exhibitions and expositions as PR strategies also afford organisations the opportunity to present products and ideas that could sway perceptions of the public. In the sense of the foregoing, the NPF can take advantage of the strategy to sell its idea to the people with a view to get their buy-in and repair the damaged image.

**Action Events** – involve strategies or tactics that are non-written and include demonstrations, special events, parades, exhibits, community contributions (advice, manpower, money, talent) as well as other non-verbal activities that can be utilised or deployed by public relations practitioners or persons to project the image of an organisation, institution or a nation in the comity of nations (Miyamoto, n.d.). In other words, it means taking advantage of special occasions to project the image of an organisation, institution or a nation such as Nigeria. It is a strategy that can be deployed by the NPF aimed at repairing its battered image at the international level.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Stakeholder and Attitude Change theories were employed to anchor this study.

- **Stakeholder Theory**

The stakeholder theory was propounded by Robbins Freeman in 1984. The proponent of this theory states that for any organisation to succeed it must pay priority attention to its relevant stakeholders. He counsels organizations to identify who or what really counts to their overall success. Harrison (2013) posits that these people are key and play significant roles in the lives of the public and communities. Oliver (2016) reiterates that stakeholders are group of people who are affected by an organisation's decisions and policies either positively or negatively. The degree of the effect on the organization underlies the stake that the groups or persons hold in the stakeholder's matrix or mapping. It ranges from low to high whether on level of interest (stake) or power (hold). Similarly, the stakeholders according to Ogedengbe (2020) included customers, employees, communities, suppliers, media, government and non-governmental organisations and regulation agencies. The arms rests predominantly on the organisation to create means to manage these different parties and generate relationships that lead to strategic cohesions for the benefits of all parties directly and indirectly. This is done by integrating the interest of all groups in a strategic fashion that ensures the long term and future success of the organisation. In doing this, it is very important to analyze the actual behaviour of all the stakeholders and identify their co-operative potential and competitive threats using the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats analysis method. The stakeholder theory also stresses that organization must integrate their stakeholders for proper positioning and engage them in constant, regular update and meeting so as to reinforce and build peaceful co-existence with the relevant stakeholders in the Nigerian society. Gregory (2017) maintains strongly that the stakeholder theory has vital strategies that have helped organisation tremendously to achieve its goal and objectives. It includes, information, consultation, involvement and partnership. Furthermore, Ogumsanya (2018) states that the stakeholder theory emphasizes the need for organisations to employ these public relations strategies to relate with their stakeholders. They include; general meeting, special event sponsorship, newsletters, luncheon, press release, press conference and media relations. These strategies are readily effective and proactive because they help to promote good interpersonal relationship between organisations and key stakeholders in the society. The stakeholder theory finds expression in this study because the Nigeria police force, Rivers State command having known that their image has been nullified and rubbished by the public, makes it imperative to consult and meet the relevant stakeholders such as the community leaders, church leaders, school heads, parents, youths, market men and women and commercial motor drivers within and outside Rivers State by earring out public enlightenment campaigns reassuring the public that the force has changed and that perpetrators and defaulters who have been denting police image will be punished squarely so as to serve as deferent to other police officers who may want to indulge in corrupt practices, violent and extrajudicial killings of civilians and innocent people while on duty in Nigeria and by extension, Rivers State.

- **Attitude Change Theory**

The Attitude change theory was propounded by Daniel Katz, Irving Sarnoff and Charles McClintoch in 1960. The proponents of this theory state that human beings are both rational and irrational depending on the prevailing facts and circumstances such as environment, association, motives, motivation, time and trends. They stress further that people's diverse thinking, actions, inactions and utterances combine to provide the basis for attitude change. They see communication as a vital force used by organisations and government agencies to change the wrong attitudes and philosophies of the people in the society to a better one through embarking on intensive public enlightenment campaign via public relations strategies.

This really helped to shape and reshape their opinions, behaviours and attitudes towards life, issues and circumstances in the environment. Furthermore, Uzoma, Chima & Kalu (2019) posit that attitude change theory rests on the fact that persuasion is a key factor used by communicators or change

agents to re-orient the values, thinking and attitudes of the people to behave properly so as to fit in the society and promote socio-economic development in the society.

The Attitude Change Theory is relevant to this study because it provides the avenue and platform for the Inspector General of police and Commissioner of police in Rivers State to carry out proactive public relations campaigns to rebrand and launder their image before the public through media relations, face-to-face consultation, meetings and donations to the public to feel their impact.

Also, it reawakens the consciousness of the key Police Management Board and Federal Government of Nigeria to organize training and retraining for Nigeria police force in all states especially Rivers State, provide a good salary, welfare package for them and good retirement base-fit for them. This will immensely discourage the Nigeria police force to desist from indulging in corrupt practices. The committee for investigation and punishing erring Nigeria police force who contravene, engage in corruption, harassment, abuse, unlawful arrest, detention and extra-judicial killing and ensures that they are brought to book so as to serve as deferent to others who may want to do same in the future.

### **Empirical Review**

Anderson and Anchora (2016) carried out an empirical survey research on "Reporting Evidence of Greater and Deeper Effects of Police Involvement in Related Armed Robbery Activities". The study was out to discover what has caused the death of many people in Nigeria following the trend of shared corruption associated with their ineffective job police performance. The result obtained using Z-scores statistical tools for data analysis shows that "Nigeria police job performance was not proactive enough to generate the expected impact on social security in the society as justifiably confirmed that 76% increase in criminal tendencies identified amongst high rank and lower Nigeria rank police officers spread in the rural and urban areas was harmful to the future workforce of police and causing lack of trust reposed in them by the citizens. It was advisable that more sustainable disciplinary measures should be adopted to enhance the standard of Nigeria police job performance by the government. The relevance of this study was traced to its concern against the criminal-related nature of robbery activities in Nigeria; the implication of the finding is that the criminal involvement of some Nigerian police officers appears to stem from the level of public confidence in Nigeria police, which indicates evidence of insecurity of life and property in the society, and if this is not improved upon, the level of life insecurity in the society will increase.

Ogbugu and Cajietan (2016) also carried out a study on "Police Performance and Kidnapping Practices in Niger Delta". The study was to examine the impact of police performance on kidnapping activities in Niger Delta, using a survey research method with which 22 question items were served on a sample of 400 respondents. Data collected and analyzed were tested using Pearson moment correlation and t-test statistics. Results obtained revealed that the relationship between police performance and kidnapping practices in Niger Delta was weak and not significant enough to generate sustainable security reduction in kidnapping practices in Niger Delta. Hence, it was recommended that the Nigerian government should develop a robust national policy and law on kidnapping practices that will be connected to the death sentence of the kidnapper. The relevance of this study is associated with its relationship with criminal activities which this present study seeks to examine. The implication of this finding is that kidnapping practices were criminal and harmful and the government failure to employ proactive control and punitive measures will do more harm than good if immediate sensitive attention is not provided for security reasons. The concern of this study is to specifically look at kidnapping practice and police performance which indicates an existing empirical gap, which this study seeks to close by examining police organisational behaviour and criminal activities in Rivers State.

Dumka (2010) studied "Ripping Practices and Social Threats in Kaduna State." The aim of the study was to find out if there is a significant relationship between ripping practices and social threats in Kaduna State. The study adopted 20 questions administered on 350 respondents drawn from urban and rural community dwellers in Kaduna State. Data collected were analyzed with the use of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Results revealed that there is a significant relationship between ripping practices and social threats in Kaduna State. The usefulness of this study was discovered in the finding of the study as associated with the empirical gap, which indicates that this study specifically examines the relationship between ripping practices and social threats in Kaduna State but does not directly examine the relationship between police organisational behaviour and criminal activities in Rivers State, which this study seeks to close the gap.

Kemnu and Yukon (2017) carried out a study on the "Menace of Sex Commoditization and Child Trafficking: The place of Social Security in South Africa". The study sought to investigate if the menace of sex commoditization and child trafficking have negatively affected the social security of residents in South Africa. Data obtained with the use of 24-item test questions was administered to a sample of 350 respondents in the cities. The data were analyzed with the use of Z-score statistics. Results obtained revealed that: "There is a negative impact of sex commoditization and child trafficking on the social security of residents in South Africa." It was advisable that the government should employ more proactive security oriented policies to be enforced by the police to stem the state of social insecurity amongst residents in South Africa. The implication of this finding is that more negative impacts of sex commoditization and child trafficking on the social security of residents in South Africa will be created and this will not distort the social security life value of residents in the country. The relevance of this study is traced to the criminal activity of "Child Trafficking" which is related to the present study. Thus, it forms the empirical gap upon which this study established its research thrust to close the gap.

Ogbalu (2012) studied "Unethical Social Activities of Nigeria Police Officers: A Focus on Increase in Crime Rate in Edo State". The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between unethical social activities of Nigeria police officers and the increase in crime rate in Edo State. A sample of 420 persons was used and data was obtained with the use of 24 item questions analyzed with the use of robust t-test statistics. Results obtained revealed that there is a significant relationship between unethical social activities of Nigeria police officers and the increase in crime rate in Edo State. This implies that the increase in crime rate is associated with unethical social activities of Nigeria police officers. It was advisable that the state and federal government should promote social security policy that will correct unethical social activities of Nigerian police officers. The relevance of this review to the present study was traced to its relationship with the concern for unethical social activities of police officers' relationship with crime rate. However, in this study, there is a difference in its title, main objective, and the location of study was noted in comparison with the main objective of the previous study and its location. This forms an empirical research gap which this study seeks to close in the current study.

Popnen and Bonalo (2018) carried out a study on "Criminal Activities and Financial Fraud: The Position of Police Officers in Kumasi-Ghana." The study aimed at finding out the position of officers in reducing "Criminal Activities and Financial Fraud" in Kumasi-Ghana. A 20-item questionnaire administered to 399 respondents in Kumasi was conducted. The use of simple percentage and the mean(x) score statistics was adopted to analyze useful data obtained. Results obtained revealed that the position of police officers in Kumasi-Ghana was partially weak to control the menace of criminal activities involving financial fraud in Kumasi-Ghana. It was advisable that the government should employ proactive police officers trained to reduce criminal activities and financial fraud in Kumasi-Ghana. The implication of this study is relevant

in the study as it concerns the position of police officers with criminal activities and financial fraud. This study shows a specific gap in the view that the previous study was carried out in Kumasi-Ghana and not in Nigeria, specifically not in Rivers State, with different objectives from the present study. This established an empirical gap not closed, which this study intends to close.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study employed the survey design. The survey design was chosen because according to Akanka, Ikon & Kieran (2019) the use of a survey for data collection is justified by the fact that it is the most appropriate method of gathering data related to demographics, attitudes, opinions and perceptions. The population of the Nigeria police force Rivers State Command stands at 3,540 (Police Public Relations Department and Open Registry). The study employed multistage sampling technique to select the respondents and divide them into units for easy investigation and accessibility. A sample size of 400 was purposively and randomly drawn from the population using Taro Yamene’s formula as a guide. This is shown below;

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

- Where n = sample size
- N = population size
- e = Tolerable error (0.05)<sup>2</sup>
- I = Constant

In the light of the above, the computation in the light of the foregoing is presented as:

$$n = \frac{3,540}{3,501 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = 399.9$$

$$n = 400$$

Also, questionnaire was the instrument used in gathering data for the study. It consisted of sections A and B. Section A was used to elicit responses from respondents’ background while section B was employed to obtain respondents’ responses to the questions contained in the instrument. Asemah & Kieran (2018) state that questionnaire is the most suitable and reliable instrument to elicit opinions from respondents in realistic setting. Furthermore, data were presented and tabulated using four point likert scale and criterion mean to analyze the research questions clearly and arrive at the correct result.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

Out of the four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents but only three hundred and ninety six (396) were retrieved and used for the analysis of data using four point likert criterion mean.

**Research Question One: What are the unethical practices performed by Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image?**

**Table 1: The unethical practices performed by Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image.**

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1.	Nigeria police takes bribes and extort money	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
2.	Nigeria police brutalities civilians	190	200	2	4	396	1366	3.4	Agreed

3.	Nigeria police arrests and detain civilians unlawfully	150	230	10	6	396	1316	3.3	Agreed
4.	Nigeria police infringes on citizens right	300	90	4	2	396	1480	3.7	Agreed
5.	Nigeria police engage in extra judicial killing	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
6.	Nigeria police settle land case	10	6	150	230	396	588	115	Disagreed
7.	Nigeria police handle marriage cases	3	3	200	190	396	611	1.5	disagreed

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

The table 1 above revealed that the unethical practices performed by Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image were that they took bribes and extort money from commercial drivers along the roads, brutalizes innocent civilians without proper investigation, arrest and unlawfully detain innocent civilians, infringes on citizens fundamental human rights and engaged in extra-judicial killings of civilians.

**Research Question Two: What are the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police force especially Rivers State?**

Table 2: The statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria Police Force especially in Rivers State.

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1.	Maintaining law and order	200	100	90	6	396	1286	3.2	Agreed
2.	Arrest and detain suspects	300	90	4	2	396	1480	3.7	Agreed
3.	Checking of vehicle at checkpoints	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
4.	Tariff controls	150	230	10	6	396	1316	3.3	Agreed
5.	Serve as prosecutors in court	190	200	2	4	396	1366	3.4	Agreed
6.	Defend the country	10	6	150	230	396	588	1.5	disagreed

**Source: field survey, 2024**

Table 2 indicated that the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police force especially in Rivers State by maintaining law and order, arrest and detain suspects, checking of suspected relieves at checkpoints, engaged in traffic controls and acts as prosecutors in command cases in courts until justice and equity is dispensed by the judge or magistrate.

**Research Question Three: What are the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police force image?**

Table 3: The Public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police force image.

S/N O	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1.	Rivers state police command employs press release	150	230	6	10	396	1312	3.3	Agreed
2.	Rivers state police command sponsor events	190	200	2	4	396	1366	3.4	Agreed
3.	Rivers state police command engage in press conference	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
4.	Rivers state police command information kits	200	100	90	6	396	1286	3.2	Agreed
5.	Rivers state police command engages in consultative meetings	150	230	396	6	396	1316	3.3	Agreed

6.	Rivers state police command uses propaganda	10	6	150	230	396	588	1.5	Disagreed
7.	Rivers state police command uses critest	3	3	200	190	139	611	1.5	disagreed

**Source: field survey, 2024**

Table 3 above showed that the public relations technique employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police force image were press releases, sponsoring events, engaged in press conferences, provide information kits, engaged in consultative meetings.

**Research Question Four: What is the level of effectiveness of public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image?**

**Table 4: The level of effectiveness of public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police image.**

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	mean	Remark
1.	The effectiveness of public relations technique employed by Rivers State police command is high	200	100	90	6	396	1286	3.2	Agreed
2.	The effectiveness of public relations technique is low	10	6	150	230	396	588	1.5	Disagreed
3.	The effectiveness of public relations technique is rarely low	3	3	200	190	396	611	1.5	Disagreed
4.	The effectiveness of public relations techniques is rarely high	4	2	190	200	396	402	1.0	Disagreed

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

The table 4 above revealed clearly that the effectiveness of public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding its image is very high which positively restored their integrity before the public.

**Research Question Five: What are the attendant challenges Rivers State police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image?**

**Table 5 the attendant challenges Rivers State police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image.**

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Σ	Mean	Remark
1.	Poor cooperation from the public	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
2.	Bureaucratic bottleneck	190	200	2	4	396	1316	3.4	Agreed
3.	Poor funding	150	230	10	6	396	1316	3.3	Agreed
4.	Poor experience and skills	300	90	4	2	396	1480	3.7	Agreed
5.	Poor modern communication technology equipment	200	190	3	3	396	1379	3.5	Agreed
6.	Party interest	3	3	200	190	396	611	1.5	Disagreed
7.	Personal interest	10	6	150	230	396	588	1.5	Disagreed
8.	Ethnic interest	4	2	200	190	396	619	1.5	Disagreed

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

The table 5 indicated strongly that the attendant challenges Rivers state police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations techniques in rebranding Nigeria police image were poor co-operation from the public, poor funding from the federal and state governments, poor experience and skills from police personnel and poor modern communication technology equipment needed for the task.

**Discussion of Findings**

The finding of the study based on research question one revealed that the unethical practices performed by Nigeria police force in Rivers State that jeopardize its image were bribery and extortion of money from commercial motors drivers at checkpoints, brutalizes innocent civilians without proper investigation, arrest and unlawfully detain innocent citizens, infringes on inalienable fundamental human rights of citizens and engaged in extra judicial killings. This corroborates the statement of Igbinoia (2022) that the Nigeria police force has lost its reputation and integrity to their indulgence in financial bribery, aiding criminals to carry out robbery, infringe on individual rights, extorts, money from commercial motor drivers at specific check points, unlawfully arrest and detain innocent persons and engaged in extra-judicial killings of innocent citizens. Cuna & Etim (2022) affirm that Nigeria police force is rotten and do not have public confidence again because they are corrupt and money seekers instead of carrying out their stratifying functions of maintaining law and order and apprehend and charge suspected persons to court for trial and judgment.

Research question two showed that the statutory responsibilities of the Nigeria police force especially in Rivers State are to maintain law and order in the state, arrest and detain suspects, checking of vehicles at check points, controls traffic along the roads and serve as prosecutors in criminal cases in court until justice prevails at the end. This corroborates the idea of Komene & Ethel (2024) that the Nigeria police force is vested with the responsibilities of enforcing law and order, protecting lives and properties, detecting crimes, restricting crimes, investigating crimes and controlling unwanted criminal behaviours in the society.

Furthermore, the findings from research question three showed that the public relations techniques employed by Rivers State police command in rebranding Nigeria police force image were press releases, sponsoring events, press conferences, information kits and consultative meetings. This agrees with Okon (2019) that effective public relations tools such as press releases, press conference, information kits and media relations immensely helped to change the negative perception and narrative which the public have towards the Nigeria police in human and corrupt nature to be more friendly and accommodating to work with the people to fight crimes in the society.

The study indicated in line with research question four that public relations techniques employed by Rivers State command in rebranding Nigeria police image was high and very effective. This is in tandem with Alemika (2018) that the public relations tools are effective mechanism used by police to launder its image before the public and maintain peaceful co-existence in the society.

Finally, the finding from research question five showed clearly that the attendant challenges Rivers State police command faces in a bid to utilizing public relations force image were poor co-operation from the public, bureaucratic bottlenecks, poor funding, poor experience and skills and poor modern communication technology equipment. This corroborates with the assertion of Odejide (2015) that the Nigeria police force is faced with bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate funding, unavailability of mobile vans, poor co-operation networks from the members of the public. Okini & Jockey (2019) confirm that because of the prevailing challenges the Nigeria police force has find it very difficult to carry out effectively public relations campaign and its role in the prevention and apprehension of criminals in the society.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Nigeria police force especially Rivers State command is vested with the statutory responsibilities of protecting lives and properties, maintaining law and order, prevention of crimes, traffic controls and other functions. The Nigeria police force occupies a vital place in the security architecture of Nigeria. When it fails, consequently Nigeria has failed. Insecurity and criminality will be on the increase. Contemporary events reveal strongly that Nigeria police force are corrupt and inhuman. This has made them to lose public confidence, trust and credibility. Public relations plays a crucial role through its techniques in rebranding and laundering its battered image through organizing special events calling for press conference and issuing press release to correct this negative trend and reinforce into the minds of the people positive values they are expected to have in the discharge of their roles thereby strengthening their relationship with stakeholders and members of the public in the fight against crime and to maintain law and order in the Nigerian society.

It is based on this ground that both the Nigeria police force management board, federal and state governments and the stakeholders are expected to collaborate with one another to give room for a feedback mechanism on gross misconducts of the Nigeria police force, identify and punish offenders after proper investigation so as to serve as deterrent to others who have been indulging in such unethical behaviours in Nigeria.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations are as follows;

- i. The Nigeria police force management board should train and retrain their personal from time to time to reawaken into their consciousness and statutory responsibilities to the society and the need to be professional and ethically responsible.
- ii. The Nigeria police force management board should ensure that they are well paid and taken adequately care off to avoid engaging in corrupt practices in the discharge of their statutory responsibilities in the society.
- iii. The Nigeria police force management board should employ proactive public relations techniques to welcome constructive criticism and suggestion for better performance in the society.
- iv. The civilians should be civil and well behaved to avoid embarrassment from Nigeria police force.
- v. Federal and State government should provide enough funds, modern communication technology equipment that will help the Nigeria police force in the prevention of crimes and tracking down criminals in the society without fear or favour.

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