

Public Relations Ethics and Administration of Educational Institutions: Perspectives from Public Universities in South-Eastern Nigeria

Patrick Okechukwu Emeter¹, Chuka Uzoma Ifediora², Emmanuel Ekefor Nwanmuoh³, Victor Onyebuchi Okolo⁴, Nkoli Winfred Emeter⁵, Paul Nnamdi Aduba⁶, Gbemisola Ogbolu⁷, Ikpo, Kobi Pamela⁸, Chinda Chimkamma Collins*⁹, and Ogbonna, Kenneth Egwuatu¹⁰,

^{1-4,6, &8}Department of Marketing, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Nigeria, ⁵Department of Public Health, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria, ⁷Department of Leadership, Management and Human Resources, Teesside University, UK ^{9&10}Department of Management, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Chinda Chimkamma Collins

Abstract

The study investigated public relations ethics and administration of educational institutions in public universities in South-Eastern Nigeria. It specifically determined the influence of public relations ethics on administration of educational institutions in public universities in South-Eastern Nigeria. Also, it assessed the influence of public relations ethics on communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders. The population of the study comprises staff of five public universities. The sample size was obtained using the Cochran's formula. The descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to staff across selected universities. The data were analyzed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model. The findings revealed that public relations ethics has a significant influence on administration of educational institutions in public universities in South-Eastern Nigeria. Similarly, it was revealed that public relations ethics has a significant influence on communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders in South-Eastern Nigeria. Therefore, it was advocated that educational institutions should formulate and rigorously implement codes of ethics in public relations practices to ensure transparency, equity, and professionalism in all forms of communication. Additionally, periodic training sessions and workshops should be conducted for administrators and public relations officers to strengthen their ethical orientation and communication competencies.

Keywords: public relations, public relations ethics, educational administration, stakeholders, communication.

Introduction

The administration of education is increasingly recognized as a communicative enterprise where effective public relations serves as the backbone of institutional governance, transparency, and trust. Educational administration involves planning, researching, organizing, coordinating, and evaluating institutional processes that affect students, staff, and the community, all of which depend on clear and structured communication for successful implementation and stakeholder alignment (Ezinwa, 2024). Within this framework, public relations ensures that these

administrative processes are not only functional but also ethically sound and socially responsible by facilitating strategic communication that enhances institutional image, stakeholder engagement, and administrative effectiveness (Karmilah et al., 2024). Ethical public relations practice requires honesty in communication, respect for stakeholder rights, and fairness in administrative dealings—principles that safeguard institutional reputation and accountability and foster greater transparency between educational leaders and their communities (Hamdi & Zamroni, 2025). Foundational communication theory in public relations also supports the idea that two-way, ethical dialogue builds trust and long-term relationships between institutions and stakeholders (Grunig et al., 2002). These practices contribute to building trust, reducing misunderstandings, and creating a participatory environment that is crucial for ethical governance in education (Hartati, 2023).

In advanced educational systems, ethics in public relations helps administrators to maintain credibility in policy communication, manage crises responsibly, and foster a participatory governance culture where stakeholders' voices influence decision-making (Ikemefuna et al., 2025). In the Nigerian context, educational administration faces multiple challenges stemming from political interference, ethnic sentiment, funding constraints, and public mistrust. These issues make the ethical dimension of public relations indispensable to institutional sustainability. Public relations within the Nigerian educational institutions must define a delicate balance between compliance with national regulations, such as directives from the Federal Ministry of Education or the National Universities Commission, and responsiveness to societal expectations for transparency and equity. Administrators who adhere to ethical communication principles contribute to good governance by providing truthful information about admissions, finances, and institutional policies.

Conversely, unethical practices, such as information manipulation, favoritism, or concealment of institutional failures, can erode stakeholder confidence and disrupt administrative harmony. Therefore, ethical public relations is not merely a communication function; it is a governance tool that supports accountability, integrity, and trust within the administrative hierarchy (Orji-Egwu & Nworie, 2023). Nwanmuoh (2025) opines that public relations is a management function and the conscience of any organization nurtured by mutual understanding and ethical practice based on factual communication. It is a balanced communication process that is

deliberately planned and implemented to ensure that an organization exists in a mutually harmonious relationship with its various stakeholders. Okolo et al. (2016) conclude that the main goal of public relations is to build and sustain a company's corporate image.

Within the South-Eastern region of Nigeria, educational administration and public relations ethics are deeply intertwined with the socio-cultural context of communal ownership and moral expectation. Historically, the region's educational system emerged from missionary and colonial influences that embedded moral instruction, character building, and community service at the core of education. Today, these values continue to guide administrative practice, as school leaders are expected to be both ethical stewards and community representatives. Educational administrators, who include principals, registrars, bursars, and deans, are thus perceived not only as bureaucratic functionaries but also as custodians of communal trust.

Public relations ethics play a decisive role in shaping administrative and credible institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria. For example, transparent handling of student admissions, responsible financial reporting, and fairness in staff recruitment depend on adherence to ethical communication. When administrators engage in deceptive practices such as misrepresenting institutional achievements to attract funding or concealing incidents of misconduct, they compromise both administrative integrity and community confidence. Conversely, an ethical public relations approach reinforces stakeholder trust, facilitates peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthens institutional legitimacy. This is particularly critical in a region where communities, alumni, and local unions actively participate in school development and expect administrators to demonstrate moral uprightness and accountability (Nwanmuoh et al., 2024). Ethical lapses in public relations can have immediate administrative consequences. Poorly managed information can escalate student protests, provoke staff discontent, or damage an institution's public image. In the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, where educational institutions symbolize communal pride and moral heritage, ethical communication fosters stability, enhances administrative effectiveness, and consolidates public trust in education, thus driving societal progress (Orji-Egwu & Nworie, 2023; Nwanmuoh et al., 2024).

Additionally, educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria encounter difficulties in maintaining ethical standards within public relations. Resource limitations frequently impede the capacity to engage trained communication professionals or to implement contemporary

information management systems. Political interference in the selection of administrators and in decision-making processes occasionally compromises transparency. The proliferation of social media has also facilitated the rapid dissemination of misinformation, thus exerting pressure on institutions to react promptly and responsibly. Sadly, numerous institutions lack formalized codes of ethics and comprehensive communication policies, thereby allowing inconsistency in the management of sensitive matters (Austin & Jin, 2015; Orji-Egwu & Nworie, 2023).

Furthermore, inadequate training in ethical communication and crisis management (Okolo et al., 2018) among administrators poses serious threats to sustainable governance. Without the requisite competencies, administrators may either mishandle sensitive information, miscommunicate institutional policies, or even fail to manage crises effectively. Collectively, these challenges erode institutional integrity, weaken stakeholder confidence, and impede the overall effectiveness of educational administration (Nwanmuoh et al., 2024). Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that a few studies have dwelt discretely on public relations ethics (Ilochi et al., 2026; Necic, 2021; Olaoluwa, 2021), while other studies dealt separately with the administration of educational institutions (Uwagboe & Obayuwana, 2021; Bakare, 2021; Amopho, 2020). Unfortunately, no study has explored the relationship between public relations ethics and the administration of educational institutions. On this backdrop, this study intends to fill this gap.

Review of Related Literature

Public Relations and Public Relations Ethics

Public relations is a strategic communicative process designed to establish and sustain mutually advantageous relationships between an organization and its stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Okolo et al. (2017) define public relations as a deliberately planned two-way symmetric communication between an organization and its various constituencies. Within the educational context, it involves the enhancement of the institution's public image, the management of information dissemination, and the cultivation of goodwill among students, faculty, parents, governmental entities, and the broader public (Asemah, 2011). It acts as a mechanism for conflict resolution, the fostering of trust, and the management of institutional reputation (Wilcox et al., 2015). It is a managerial process and approach aimed at establishing and maintaining a two-way symmetric communication and relationship between an organization and its various stakeholders based on respect, truth, trust, transparency, fairness, and professionalism. Lopez

(2024) and Vieira and Grantham (2015) opine that the basic responsibility of public relations professionals is to offer their stakeholders invaluable communication that will lead to mutual relationship building and sustenance.

Ethics refers to the moral principles and standards that guide professional behavior among public relations practitioners (Necic, 2021). It is about displaying decorum in managing organizational communications and relationships with their stakeholders. Thus, ethics is inextricably tied to the public relations practice. Nevertheless, professional code of ethics must be observed by all public relations organizations or associations (Idid & Arandas, 2016), since the cynosure of ethical decision making in public relations is the professional values displayed by practitioners of the profession (Idid & Arandas, 2016). In fact, ethics is fundamental to professional public relations.

An ethically minded public relations professional distinguishes himself by managing the communications and relationships between his clients (his employer) and the public (stakeholders) with a high sense of integrity, honesty, and responsibility. Ki et al. (2012) observe that organizations whose corporate culture is embedded in an ethical code of conduct attract practitioners who are professionals, unlike those organizations that ignore the relevance of having ethical codes of conduct and standards enshrined in the character of their experts. Ilochi et al. (2026) conducted a study on the relationship between media communication and public relations ethics in South-Eastern Nigeria and revealed that the quality of communications was positively and significantly influenced by ethical public relations practices in South-Eastern Nigeria. The findings also reveal that credibility and trustworthiness of media communications in South-Eastern Nigeria were influenced by ethical public relations practices.

Administration of Educational Institutions in Nigeria

Administration is a strategic approach for the realization of the aspirations of an organization through prudent utilization of its scarce resources (Ogunode et al., 2020). According to Ogunode et al. (2020:7), “school administration looks at the effective allocation, supervision, and organization of school resources to realize the objectives of the educational institutions.” The administration of an educational institution entails the effective planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of all educational processes and activities needed to achieve the goals set by such an institution. Ogunode (2020) and Umesi and Nwanguma (2025) define university administration as the utilization of resources to pursue certain deliberately set objectives. In other

words, it denotes the way in which an institution is run. Dei (2024) equates administration with leadership and defines it as the process of directing the affairs of an institution towards the actualizing of its objectives through the promotion of students' welfare. In his view, Amopho (2020) concludes that it is the manifestation of the goals set by an institution through adequate management of available resources (man, money, machine, and materials). He emphasized that these goals can easily be attained when proper learning and training of staff are initiated in the institution's policies and programmes. According to Dei (2024), the key administrative components of educational institutions include the Vice Chancellors, registrars, deans, directors of institutes, and departmental heads. Dei (2024) advises that the collaboration between all stakeholders and their key administrative elements must be prioritized to develop and implement robust policies that will engender progress and survival. In support of this, Makinde (2024) highlights that the trio: collaboration, innovation, and equity are the virtues that must be built by those in administrative authorities to confront the threats facing institutional administration in the global society.

More so, institutions leverage effective administration to ensure vigorous management of resources aimed at achieving quality education and overall institutional goals (Makinde, 2024). Interestingly, the judicious administration of educational institutions is germane since it leads to palpable progress in terms of teaching and learning, good character formation, high academic performance, staff motivation, quality upward and downward communications, relationships, and peaceful coexistence. Ogunode et al. (2020) narrate that the quality and standard of educational institutions in Nigeria have tremendously deteriorated as a result of many challenges they face. Oyeleke and Fehintola (2025) regret the influence of political interference and the downgrading of national policy by administrative authorities in educational institutions in Nigeria. Moreover, Makinde (2024) and Ogunode (2020) enumerate the challenges and solutions to educational institutions' administration in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Bakare (2021) emphasizes that ethics must be integrated into the administration of educational institutions in Nigeria. In his study, it was revealed that since ethics was compromised, corruption has inundated every domain of university administration. Dei (2024) suggests that corruption and abuse of power by those in leadership positions will be deracinated

when strong and transparent administration is established and sustained in public universities in Nigeria.

Public Relations Ethics on Transparency Administration of Educational Institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria

Public relations as a relationship-building and sustenance strategy is germane in educational administration of schools (Hidayat, 2021). Hidayat (2021) states that in educational institutions, the key doctrine preached by public relations is transparency. According to him, transparency in the implementation of the educational program entails making educational information available to the stakeholders. Nonetheless, public relations ethics encompasses the foundational principles, standards, and moral frameworks that govern the discipline of public relations, with an emphasis on ensuring integrity, fairness, transparency, and accountability in the practice of communication (Bowen, 2007). This domain underscores the imperative for practitioners to reconcile the interests of their organizations with those of the public while eschewing manipulative or deceptive methodologies (Parsons, 2016). Ethical public relations cultivates trust, credibility, and sustainable positive relationships between an organization and their stakeholders (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001).

Transparency refers to the ethical principle of openness in actions, decisions, and communication, allowing stakeholders to clearly understand how and why decisions are made. It emphasizes the availability, accessibility, and clarity of information, especially in governance and organizational contexts. Transparency reduces corruption and strengthens accountability by enabling public scrutiny (Muslim & Mais, 2023). When processes are transparent, trust is enhanced because stakeholders can verify that actions align with the stated values and rules. Transparency, therefore, supports ethical decision-making by minimizing secrecy and promoting responsibility.

However, in public relations practice, transparency is a fundamental aspect of the code of ethics (Stanic, 2019). As a matter of urgency, Villanueva and Merle (2025) remark that educational administrators must be guided by the culture of ethics and transparency in order to establish and maintain a good sense of responsibility, integrity, and trust. According to them, ethics and transparency support ethical leadership, thus improving governance in educational administration. These engender understanding and peace among relevant educational institutions' stakeholders. So, in offering adequate administration of educational institutions,

transparency is indispensable. Underpinning this, Wood and Aronczyk (2020) observe that transparency mitigates corruption since it makes the public see how the administration is run by the government. For harmony and efficiency to thrive in tertiary institutions, transparency must be enshrined to trigger human relations, a key aspect of public relations (Muhammad, 2017). Similarly, transparency in the administration of educational institutions entails that all information and decisions that concern all educational stakeholders, such as students, staff, parents, and the general public, must be conveyed to them by the management of the institutions in an honest, open, and accountable manner to build and sustain mutual understanding and long-term relationships that foster the growth and success of the institution.

In addition, if an organization initiates a corporate culture of transparency in its administration, there will be a free flow of two-way symmetric communication (Ozgan, nd). For Ozga (nd), transparency stimulates trust in public administration, thus encouraging adequate use of organizational resources. Ergun (2020) highlights that transparency requires that the relevant stakeholders must be aware of management decisions about educational institutions in issues relating to work and operations. A transparent school, according to Karaevli and Levent (2014), is an educational institution in which information is made to be overtly understood, openly shared, and accessed by concerned individuals in a way that does not cause any security breach. Ozgan (nd) submits that transparency catalyzes success in an organization's administration since decisions and operations are made known to all employees. In the administration of educational institutions, stakeholder participation in the decision-making process and reporting is encouraged since it fosters adequate monitoring and improves transparency (Ozgan, nd). Upon this submission, the researchers propose that:

H1: Public relations ethics has a significant influence on administration of educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Public Relations Ethics on Enhancing Honesty and Fairness in Communication Between Institutions and Stakeholders

In communicating with its stakeholders, professionals of public relations are committed to upholding fairness, honesty, and transparency (Oduenyi et al., 2025). This is crucial since it is ethically visible that all stakeholders want to participate in the scheme of activities that concern them. Unequivocally, the concept of ethics cannot be separated from the practice of public relations (Jahiri, 2021). In agreement, Milovan et al. (2023) emphasize that ethical issues are sine

qua non and cannot be extricated from public relations practice. Ethics are the principles that ensure that public relations professionals conduct themselves responsibly by being honest, fair, and transparent while reaching their stakeholders through impactful communication channels. Jiang (2023) notes that public relations professionals play a midwifery role between an organization and the public and are thus expected to build and sustain strong relationships that will earn them trust and goodwill. Kirat (2012:479) states that “the ethics of PRs consists of values such as honesty, loyalty, social responsibility, fairness, respect, integrity, and responsible and forthright communication.”

In contrast, Kirat (2012) observes that unethical communication causes deceit and confusion since it has no moral or legal backing. Therefore, practitioners are expected to observe public relations' ethical codes and standards by being truthful to the public while communicating with them, since it earns them a good corporate reputation (Efendi, et al., 2024). Milovan et al. (2023) express their worry, narrating that the credibility and reputation of public relations practitioners in Nigeria are questionable since their commitment to ethical values and professional standards is tenuous. Haque and Ahmad (2017) warn that professionals must be committed to upholding the ethical values such as fairness, honesty, integrity, transparency, loyalty, and respect. This will improve stakeholder perception and relationships through credible communication to ensure organizational growth and survival (Hou & Johnston, 2024). Sadly, Olaoluwa (2020) explains that the attitudes of Nigerian public relations practitioners towards ethical standards are antithetical to the norms, thus widening the gap between ethics and professionalism. And that is why Zimanyi and Makamani (2020) conclude that practitioners in Nigeria observe ethical values just to avert ethical confusion. Upon this submission, the researchers propose that:

H2: Public relations has a significant influence on communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Empirical Reviews

Some empirical findings were acknowledged in the study. For instance, in a parallel investigation, Ezeah and Odionye (2021) evaluated public relations units and their crisis management strategies within selected universities in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. Employing a mixed-method framework, grounded in human relations theory and the public relations transfer process model, their research revealed that public relations units adopt strategies such as improved communication with both staff and students. Nevertheless, they

frequently demonstrate inadequacies in structured crisis protocols and consistent ethical frameworks. They advocated for universities to formalize comprehensive crisis management plans and to strengthen the capacities of public relations personnel to ensure compliance with ethical standards and effective crisis resolution.

In a more exhaustive analysis, Olaoluwa (2021) explored the factors affecting the ethical principles of public relations practitioners in Nigerian institutions. The research, which included surveys of practitioners, employers, clients, and professional organizations, disclosed that a diverse array of stakeholders, including employers, clients, colleagues, societal influences, and inadequate professional enforcement, shape the ethical behavior of public relations professionals. The findings revealed that the expectations of clients and employers frequently clash with established ethical norms, resulting in compromised practices. The study recommended the fortification of professional codes, the provision of ethics education, and the execution of periodic audits of public relations practices to ensure congruence between institutional expectations and professional standards.

A multitude of empirical studies have examined public relations practices and their ethical implications in the administration of higher education institutions in Nigeria, especially within the South-Eastern region. For instance, Matthew et al. (2024) undertook an evaluation of public relations practices across three universities in Enugu State, such as the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, and Godfrey Okoye University. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey methodology, the study gathered responses from staff and stakeholders, elucidating that public relations is instrumental in shaping institutional image. However, the research also uncovered inconsistencies in managerial support and institutional commitment to public relations practices. It advocated for increased institutional backing, the professionalization of public relations departments, and strategic engagement with stakeholders to enhance efficacy.

Inya (2018) investigated the influence of social media on public relations practices within universities located in the South-Eastern region. Through qualitative interviews conducted with eight public relations practitioners across eight distinct universities, the study demonstrated that social media has fundamentally altered public relations by facilitating expedited communication and broader outreach. Nonetheless, this transformation has also given rise to ethical challenges,

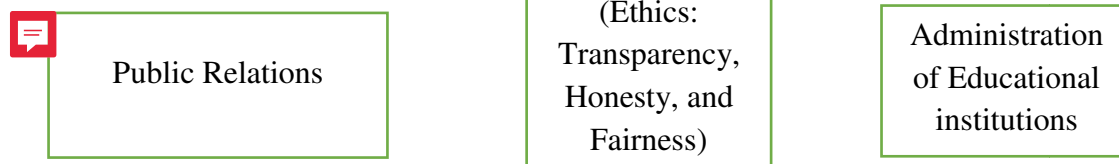
including the potential for misinformation and the absence of formal regulatory mechanisms. The investigation recommended providing targeted training for public relations officers on the ethical use of social media, as well as establishing institutional policies governing the dissemination of social media content.

In a further investigation, Makata (2019) examined the ramifications of community relations on the reputational stature of higher education institutions in the South-Eastern region. Utilizing a quantitative survey method, the research identified a substantial positive correlation between proactive community engagement and an augmented university reputation. The results suggested that insufficient community involvement contributes to reputational fragilities and a diminution in stakeholder confidence. Therefore, the study advocated that institutions should allocate sufficient resources to public relations and community engagement initiatives while undertaking regular assessments of the effectiveness of their outreach programs.

Theoretical Underpinning

The study is anchored on the excellence theory of public relations that was articulated by Grunig and Hunt (1984). This theory posits that two-way symmetrical communication (Nmere et al., 2020) represents the most ethical and effective model of organizational communication. It contends that organizations achieve success when they prioritize dialogue over unilateral persuasion, thus cultivating mutual trust and credibility with stakeholders. In the context of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria, this theory is particularly relevant as these institutions operate within culturally entrenched communities that emphasize consultation, transparency, and inclusivity in their decision-making processes. The implementation of the excellence theory requires that administrators not only disseminate information but also engage in active listening and integrate feedback from students, staff, alumni, and local communities. By fostering ethical and symmetrical communication, universities in South-Eastern Nigeria can enhance stakeholder trust, mitigate conflict, and increase the legitimacy of governance.

Conceptual Model of the Study



Source: Author's Conceptual Model, 2026

Consequently, the conceptual framework delineates public relations ethics as the independent variable, while administration of educational institutions and institutional communication with stakeholders were designated as the dependent variables. This framework posits that adherence to ethical standards and the strategic management of communication render the administration of educational institutions more efficacious while making the relationships with stakeholders more enduring.

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was adopted in the study, and a questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1). For face and content validity, 3 copies of the questionnaire were vetted by 2 Marketing professors and one Public Relations professor to ensure that the statements in the research instrument accurately measure what it ought to measure. A pilot survey was conducted by distributing 20 copies of the questionnaire. However, the returned copies were subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha, and 0.857 was obtained, indicating that there is internal consistency of the research instrument. However, the population of the study consists of staff of six public universities in South-Eastern Nigeria, such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Imo State University, Owerri, Abia State University, Uturu, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. However, to determine the sample size, Cochran's formula was adopted, and 384 was obtained. The convenience sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents. The 384 copies of the self-administered questionnaire were distributed, and 342 were retrieved and used for data analysis. In testing the hypotheses, the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model was adopted with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

Table 4: Likert Scale Table**Section A: Public Relations Ethics and Administration of Educational Institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria**

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean
1	Ethical public relations practices improve administrative transparency in educational institutions.	104 (520)	201 (804)	7 (28)	20 (40)	10 (10)	4.1
2	Adherence to ethical principles in public relations promotes effective leadership and institutional governance.	176 (880)	145 (580)	1 (3)	10 (20)	10 (10)	4.37
3	Ethical compliance with public relations strengthens accountability among education administrators.	187 (935)	133 (532)	12 (36)	4 (8)	6 (6)	4.44
4	Ethical lapses in public relations practices weaken administrative credibility in educational institutions.	194 (974)	123 (492)	5 (15)	5 (10)	5 (5)	4.37
5	Public relations ethics encourage fairness and integrity in the administration of schools.	122 (610)	165 (660)	30 (90)	20 (40)	5 (5)	4.11
6	Observing ethical standards in public relations enhances decision-making efficiency among school leaders.	210 (1050)	90 (360)	12 (36)	20 (40)	10 (10)	4.37
7	The enforcement of public relations ethics positively influences the reputation and stability of educational management.	132 (660)	156 (624)	32 (96)	12 (24)	10 (10)	4.13

Source: Researchers Computation

The results from Section A (Table 4) show that respondents overwhelmingly agree that public relations ethics play a crucial role in the administration of educational institutions. Across all seven items, the mean scores range from 4.1 to 4.44, indicating a strong positive perception of ethical public relations practices. The highest mean (4.44) suggests that ethical compliance

significantly enhances accountability among education administrators. Similarly, high agreement levels reveal that ethics promote transparency, good governance, fairness, and improved decision-making. Respondents also believe that ethical lapses can undermine administrative credibility, further reinforcing the importance of ethics. Overall, the data demonstrate that ethical public relations practices strongly support effective and credible educational administration.

Table 5
Section B: Public Relations Ethics and Institutional Communication with Stakeholders in South-Eastern Nigeria

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean
1	Ethical communication practices improve mutual understanding between educational institutions and their stakeholders.	171 (855)	129 (516)	23 (69)	10 (20)	9 (9)	4.30
2	Adherence to ethical public relations principles enhances transparency in stakeholder communication.	185 (925)	151 (604)	6 (18)	0	0	4.52
3	Ethical standards in public relations build trust between institutions and their stakeholders.	133 (665)	156 (624)	14 (42)	20 (40)	19 (19)	4.06
4	Misleading communication practices undermine stakeholder confidence in educational institutions.	145 (725)	131 (524)	16 (48)	45 (90)	5 (5)	4.07
5	Regular ethical evaluation of communication practices strengthens stakeholder loyalty and cooperation.	120 (600)	144 (576)	44 (132)	24 (48)	10 (10)	3.99
6	Upholding ethical standards in information dissemination reduces misunderstandings between institutions and the public.	178 (890)	142 (568)	12 (36)	4 (8)	6 (6)	4.41
7	Ethical public relations communication enhances the public image and credibility of educational institutions.	201 (1005)	140 (560)	1 (3)	0	0	4.58

Source: Researchers Computation

The results in Section B indicate a consistently strong agreement that ethical public relations practices significantly enhance institutional communication with stakeholders. Mean scores, which range from 3.99 to 4.58, show that respondents generally believe ethical communication improves understanding, transparency, trust, and credibility. The highest mean (4.58) suggests that ethical communication greatly strengthens the public image of educational institutions. Similarly, high agreement levels reveal that ethical standards reduce misunderstandings and increase stakeholder confidence. Even items addressing the negative impact of unethical communication received strong agreement, highlighting the importance of honesty and clarity. Overall, the data affirm that ethical public relations practices are essential for effective and trustworthy stakeholder communication in educational institutions.

Observations made, notwithstanding the incidence of non-response, the valid responses obtained (342) were deemed sufficient for analytical purposes, as they constitute over 90% of the sample. The observed distribution patterns and the localized backgrounds of staff respondents enhance the reliability of the data, while simultaneously indicating possible socio-cultural dynamics that influence institutional administration within South-Eastern Nigerian universities.

Test of Hypothesis One

H1: Public relations ethics has a significant influence on the administration of educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Decision rule: Accept the null hypothesis if the probability value of t-statistic is not less than 5% level of significance, otherwise accept the alternate.

Table 6: OLS regression model

Variable	C	Std. error	t-stat	p-value	R ²
Constant	1.245	0.182	6.84	0.0000	
Public Relations Ethics	0.693	0.044	15.75	0.0000	0.511

Source: Researchers computation

Table 2 indicated a positive coefficient sign of 0.693 and a corresponding probability value of t-statistic (0.0000). Showing an explanation of 51% variation of the explanatory variable on the dependent variable, leaving 49% unexplained.

Decision: The hypothesis is accepted, indicating that public relations ethics has a significant influence on administration of educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H2: Public relations ethics has a significant influence on communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Table 7: OLS regression table

Variable	C	Std. error	t-stat	p-value	R ²	F-stat(p-value)
Constant	1.112	0.175	6.35	0.0000	0.52	0.0000
Public Relations Practices	0.735	0.042	17.50	0.0000		

Table 3 indicated a positive coefficient sign of 0.735 and a corresponding probability value of t-statistic (0.0000). Showing an explanation of 52 % variation of the explanatory variable on the dependent variable, leaving 48 % unexplained.

Decision: The hypothesis is accepted, indicating that public relations ethics has a significant influence on communication between educational institutions and their stakeholders in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Discussion

A comparative examination of the results derived from Sections A and B in relation to hypotheses one and two substantiates the assertion that public relations ethics assume a statistically significant and pragmatic function within the administration and stakeholder communication of educational institutions situated in South-Eastern Nigeria. In regard to hypothesis one, the analytical outcome revealed that public relations significantly impact the governance of educational institutions; an assertion that is strongly corroborated by the elevated mean scores (4.1–4.44) as articulated in Section A. These scores reflect the respondents' consensus that ethical public relations practices foster transparency, accountability, leadership efficacy, credibility, and equity within school governance. This empirical finding corroborates the preceding research conducted by Matthew et al. (2024), who documented that public relations practices substantially influence institutional procedures and reputation, albeit they observed discrepancies in institutional endorsement. Both collections of findings validate that ethical and adequately planned public relations practices are essential for achieving administrative efficacy and institutional governance. This also aligned with (Nwanmuoh, 2025).

In a similar vein, the results presented in Section B exhibit a strong correlation with hypothesis two, which posits that public relations methodologies markedly facilitate communication between educational entities and their respective stakeholders. The average scores (3.99–4.58) indicate a robust consensus that ethical communication fosters mutual understanding, trust, transparency, stakeholder confidence, loyalty, and institutional credibility. This result corroborates the work of Makata (2019), who demonstrated that proactive community relations and transparent stakeholder engagement significantly enhance institutional reputation and public trust. Both the current investigation and Makata's research underscore that ethical public relations communication mitigates misunderstandings, enhances cooperation, and improves overall relations with stakeholders.

Furthermore, although hypothesis one accentuates the internal administrative ramifications of public relations ethics, hypothesis two broadens this impact to encompass relationships with external stakeholders. Nevertheless, both areas reveal a shared theme: ethical public relations function as a strategic instrument for augmenting institutional efficacy, reputation, and stability. The alignment of questionnaire data with empirical literature thereby substantiates the study's conclusion that ethical public relations practices profoundly influence both administrative outcomes and stakeholder engagement within educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study set out to critically examine the influence of public relations ethics on the governance of educational institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria, as well as to assess the role of ethical public relations in strengthening communication between institutions and their stakeholders. The findings clearly demonstrate that ethical public relations practices are indispensable for promoting transparency, trust, and accountability within educational administration. Additionally, communication anchored in ethical principles serves as a vital mechanism for enhancing productive relationships among school authorities, staff, students, parents, and the broader community. By illuminating these dynamics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how ethical public relations not only improve administrative effectiveness but also enhance stakeholder engagement and reinforce institutional harmony. So, the educational institutions ought to formulate and rigorously implement codes of ethics in public relations practice to guarantee transparency, equity, and professionalism in all forms of communication.

Also, periodic training sessions and workshops should be conducted for administrators and public relations officers to augment their ethical orientation and communication competencies.

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