

## ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This study investigates the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Public Relations (PR) practice in Nigeria, focusing on the challenges and prospects. AI has transformed PR globally by improving communication strategies, yet Nigeria faces barriers that hinder its full adoption. The research aims to assess the level of awareness of AI among Nigerian PR practitioners, identify the main obstacles to its integration, and explore the potential benefits and ethical concerns associated with AI deployment. Using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the study applied a mixed-method approach, analysing both quantitative and qualitative data to provide insights into how AI can transform PR in Nigeria. Findings reveal that while majority of PR practitioners are aware of AI not many have adopted AI tools in their daily work. Major challenges identified include, inadequate technical expertise, infrastructure deficits, ethical issues like data privacy, job displacement and the loss of human touch in communication. To overcome these obstacles, the study recommends investing in AI training for PR professionals, improving digital infrastructure, creating ethical guidelines and fostering collaboration between PR firms and AI experts.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), Assessment, Knowledge, Public Relations (PR)

### Introduction

One of the defining features of the digital information age, is the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In recent years, the use of AI has greatly impacted various fields, including Public Relations (PR). The knowledge and application of artificial intelligence among public relations practitioners in Nigeria as an enabler for effective communication is the focus of this study.

Globally, organisations leverage AI tools such as chatbots, sentiment analysis and natural language processing to enhance communication strategies and streamline PR processes (Chen *et al.*, 2020). By incorporating AI into PR practices, professionals gain the ability to target audiences more precisely, personalise communication and make data-driven decisions. This enables PR professionals to deal with the complexities of the media landscape more effectively (Somerville &

Tubbs, 2019). While AI offers several benefits, issues like ethical considerations, transparency and potential job displacements are challenges that need to be addressed (Wright and Hinson, 2019).

In Nigeria, the use of AI applications, especially in the field of PR is advancing steadily. This is attributed to shifts in media consumption habits. Okorie & Ekwunife (2018), stated that, though traditional methods remain relevant, there is a growing need for innovative approaches that suit the digital era. The utilisation of AI in PR in Nigeria is becoming prevalent with some practitioners using tools like chatbots, sentiment analysis, etc to improve their communication with stakeholders.

However, alongside this enthusiasm greeting the use of AI in PR Practice, are some notable challenges. One significant obstacle is the digital divide. This refers to the gap between those who have access to information and communication

technologies and those who do not. Despite the increasing internet penetration in Nigeria, this divide persists.

To comprehensively understand the implications of AI adoption in PR practice in Nigeria, it is crucial to examine both the challenges and prospects associated with this technological advancement. Through investigation into the current state of AI integration in PR, the barriers impeding it and the likely benefits it offers are unveiled. Therefore, this study aims to assess the knowledge and use of artificial intelligence among public relations practitioners in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The adoption of AI in PR practice has the potential to revolutionise communication strategies and stakeholder engagement globally. However, in Nigeria, there is a significant gap between the recognised potential of AI and its actual integration into PR practices due to its poor knowledge among practitioners (Apkan *et al.*, 2022). This disparity is attributed to various challenges including shortage of skilled professionals, inadequate government regulations and policies, infrastructure deficits such as power outages and limited internet access. Financial constraints, data availability and privacy concerns, fear of job displacement are also some of the challenges being experienced.

The problem is further compounded by the lack of real-time data analysis and predictive capabilities, which are essential for navigating the complexities of strategic communication. Addressing this issue requires a shift from traditional PR methods to more advanced, AI-driven strategies that can provide the precision and agility needed in today's professional practice (Okorie & Ekwunife, 2018). The problem in addition, lies in the current gap between what is technologically possible and what is being practiced in Nigerian PR. This gap underscores the importance of exploring how AI can be leveraged to enhance PR

strategies and improve stakeholder's interface.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to assess the knowledge and use of artificial intelligence among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. The study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- i. Determine the level of awareness of AI technology among PR practitioners in Nigeria.
- ii. Identify the main obstacles impeding the adoption of AI to enhance PR practices in Nigeria.
- iii. Determine the potential benefits and achievements of the current frameworks on AI and PR in Nigeria.
- iv. Investigate ethical concerns that should be considered when deploying AI in PR practice in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

According to Russell & Norvig, (2016), AI refers to machines' ability to mimic intelligent human behaviour, which involves learning from data, understanding natural language, recognising patterns, solving problems, and making decisions. AI systems utilise algorithms, statistical models and computational methods to replicate functions associated with human intelligence.

AI, encompassing technologies that improve performance in cognitive tasks like visual perception, writing, reading, and analysis, offers numerous benefits for public relations. As noted by Kaput (2021), integrating AI is crucial for enhancing the capabilities of public relations professionals across various aspects, including crafting press releases, monitoring media, generating content, analysing target audiences and evaluating markets.

This study adopts the definition of AI proposed by Russell & Norvig (2016) due to its clarity of specifying AI as

encompassing machines that can learn from data, understand and process natural language, identify patterns, solve problems and make decisions that traditionally require human intelligence which are the distinct characteristics of the AI technology.

### **Public Relations**

PR serves as a strategic communication practice dedicated to nurturing relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. It is a continuous interaction between an organisation, the public, media, investors, employees, and government entities. The main goal of PR is to cultivate and maintain a favourable image, reputation, and mutual understanding between the organisation and its diverse audiences (Cutlip *et al.*, 2019). This encompasses more than just disseminating information; it also involves actively shaping perceptions, establishing trust, managing crises and fostering positive interactions across different communication channels.

From the forging understanding of PR, the researcher defines it as the deliberate strategic interaction of an organisation with its public to sustain mutual understanding and build its reputation. The definition presupposes that the interaction, using digitally enabled applications will be a continuous one.

This study adopted the PR definition established by Cutlip *et al.* (2019). They define “PR as a strategic communication practice focused on building and nurturing relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. These stakeholders can include the public, media outlets, investors, employees and government entities. The core objective of PR is to cultivate and maintain a positive image, reputation, and a sense of mutual understanding between the organisation and its diverse audiences”. This goes beyond simply disseminating information; it encompasses actively shaping public perception, building trust,

managing crises, and fostering positive interactions across various communication channels.

### **Review of Related Literature and Empirical Studies**

This involves both a general and a specific review. The general review includes materials that are relevant from both a global and regional standpoint. The specific review focused on relevant works on AI and PR Practices in Nigeria. Lastly, the review identifies some research gaps in previous studies that this research seeks to fill.

### **Overview of Artificial Intelligence**

The early stages of AI were seen at the start of the 20th century. The foundations of AI were laid by using formal logic in reasoning and formal methods of manipulating symbols (Ionita, 2015). Several mathematicians including Alan Turing (1912–1954) and Norbert Wiener (1894–1964), developed the foundations of AI as a field of scientific research. In the second half of the 20th century, electronic computers and programming languages developed rapidly. At the same time, information theory and cybernetics appear.

AI is used to develop systems that can understand, think and learn just like human beings. The AI is replicating human intelligence and can perform tasks such as playing games, planning surgery, driving a vehicle, suggesting a shopping list, etc. With the help of AI, the software or processes developed can solve real-world problems, such as health care, travel, marketing, traffic, etc., with greater accuracy and speed. In a way, it provides an intelligent link between perception and action (Furman & Seamans, 2019).

Nilsson (2010) notes that the historical perspective gives an insight into understanding the systematic development and growth of AI. Several types of AI systems can be used to represent intelligent

behaviour, among them learning new things and explaining and making suggestions to users. In addition, with the help of machine learning and artificial neural networks, robots have been developed that work in an environment where there is a risk to humans. The expert systems using AI are being created and can be used for a large number of activities. These systems have a large number of applications, including solving knowledge-intensive tasks quickly. The expert systems and AI can be used to create personal virtual assistants. AI has several advantages and disadvantages that are to be considered while developing some applications (Garg, 2021).

Bostrum (2014) argues that there have been rapid advancements in machine learning which has propelled the progress of AI globally as a force to contend with across various fields in reforming industries, economies and societies worldwide. It is seen to have rapidly changed and influenced so many sectors of society the likes of healthcare and finance to manufacturing and transportation, Mass communication to mention a few. AI-driven solutions enhance efficiency, improve processes and enable innovation in product development and customer service all around the world (Bostrum, 2014).

Kaur (2016) has noted in her work on AI that more declarative, knowledge-filled representations of computation and problem-solving will result in a globally connected information and computing infrastructure that will harness the power and diversity of massive amounts of online systematic resources in various sectors of society. Kaur further notes that AI is influencing various aspects of everyday life. The integration of AI technologies into societal infrastructure presents opportunities to address societal challenges, improve quality of life and drive inclusive growth.

With the growing influence of AI in society, Puauschunder (2019) notes in her

study of AI Market Disruption, that the introduction of AI in our contemporary society imposes historically exceptional challenges for humankind. She further noted that the emerging autonomy of AI holds unique potential for the eternal life of robots, AI algorithms alongside unprecedented economic superiority. She listed data storage and computational advantages as additional features that AI offers. Puauschunder states that to this day, it remains unclear what impact AI taking over the workforce will have on economic growth. There has been a global conversation among nations, governments, industry stakeholders, academia and civil society organizations about the future of AI. This is against the backdrop of the role AI plays in advancing research, development innovation and ensuring equal distribution of AI benefits across the globe. The future of AI is both promising and ambiguous (Puauschunder, 2019).

### **Artificial Intelligence and Ethical Consideration**

The works of Bostrum (2014) and Russell & Norvig (2010), noted that the advancement of AI has brought about so many concerns and how to manage them. These are especially in areas of ethical implications, privacy of data, and displacement of jobs due to automation. The potential misuse of AI technologies, are also a major concern. Addressing these ethical concerns is crucial to ensuring the responsible development and deployment of AI systems.

Bostrum, (2014) also thinks that worldwide, governments and regulatory institutions are struggling with the need to develop guidelines to govern the use of AI. These efforts are important in balancing innovation and societal interests. These include addressing concerns related to AI systems being accountable, transparent, and impartial. This is necessary because AI is becoming part of the global society.

Huang *et al.*, (2023) is of the opinion that AI has fundamentally transformed and will continue to shape our daily lives. Its applications span across a multitude of sectors, including autonomous driving, healthcare, media, finance, industrial automation, and internet services. This widespread adoption and deep integration of AI into our economy and society have resulted in increased efficiency and numerous benefits. However, this rapid advancement also brings about significant ethical considerations and challenges. Concerns like privacy breaches, discrimination, job displacement, and security vulnerabilities stemming from AI systems have posed considerable challenges for individuals and communities alike. Consequently, the study of AI ethics has emerged as a vital area of research, garnering attention within academic circles, individuals and organizations. Nations are also seeking to address these ethical dilemmas to ensure responsible AI development and deployment (Huang *et al.*, 2023).

Recent concerns globally are targeted toward the ethical inclination of the rapidly growing AI. Siteanu *et al* (2022) believe that in the future, an artificial brain structure capable of producing advanced information processing processes characteristic of the human mind (thinking, imagination, and creativity) will be realized. Scientific research to implement non-cognitive processes will allow for the creation of machines with consciousness and even morality in the future. In this way, the machines will become capable of manifesting feelings. In this situation, it is important to identify and implement appropriate ethical guidelines and mechanisms that respond to a series of fundamental appeals. It is important considering the development of AI which surpasses human abilities or becomes a nature that can no longer be understood or control.

## **Nexus of AI and Public Relations Practice**

Blankson and Anani-Bossman (2023) studied the implications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) powered by AI on PR practice in Africa. They highlighted that in the past two decades, technological development has transformed the business world and the PR sector is not left out. The adoption of new digital communication tools offers PR practitioners an extraordinary opportunity to reinvent themselves to strengthen relationships. It helps to build customer satisfaction, effectively monitor the environment and improve communication. Africa has to take advantage of AI tools to benefit its different organizations and the continent at large.

Sharma (2021) is of the idea that the PR sector globally is slowly but surely adjusting to new technologies. Organisations, agencies and governments have begun harnessing the ability of AI in their day-to-day functions, to achieve its potential. AI aid in simplifying client operations and create new experiences that improve value. AI is already assisting with tasks like creating reports, drafting press releases and emails, writing and broadcasting press notes. It helps in changing speech-to-text and creating targeted media lists, among other things. Sharma (2021) highlighted in her research on the power of AI in PR that the whole area of machine learning and robotics is adding value to the profession by cutting down on tedious tasks, thereby fast-tracking human achievements.

Previous reviews are very different from that of Osswald (2019), which talks about PR through the lens of decision-making. He noted that decisions can be regarded as a way of dealing with complexity. From the foregoing, two approaches to decisions and complexity were discussed. He focused on decision-making as a means of managing environmental complexity in finding adequate responses to issues. Also, he

talked about ways of simplifying decision-making processes. A decision-based tactic that builds on communication will contribute to a more detailed understanding of PR practice.

Rahikainen (2020) carried out a study and the focus was on determining how PR professionals construct their understanding of artificial intelligence for PR purposes through PR professionals' blog texts. A discourse analysis-based repertoire analysis of thirty blog texts was conducted to trace the dominant repertoires present in the blog texts about AI in PR. Thus, the analytical focus was on repertoires and the themes constructing them. Moreover, as per Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory, a secondary focus point was to see whether aspects of the diffusion process could be revealed through themes and repertoires. The study discovered the main dominant repertoires found were the repertoires of educating, importance, advantage and human superiority. Each repertoire marks how PR professionals construct their understanding of AI in PR. In the repertoire of educating, PR professional's emphasis learning, gaining, and sharing knowledge about AI. On the other hand, repertoire of importance sees them grasping the prominence of the issue and the need for up-skilling.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Imperatively, before the advent of the new media, the impact of PR activities was not easily measured. However, social media has made the quantification of investments made in PR measurable through several metrics available on the platform (Bakir *et al.*, 2019). The studies done by Apuke & Tunca, (2018) titled: Understanding the Implications of Social Media Usage in the Electoral Processes and Campaigns in Nigeria and the one by Ogbette *et al.*, (2019) on Fake News in Nigeria: Cases, Effects and Management, talks about how social media can be used to get general feedback by public relations practitioners in

Nigeria. One-way social media has assisted practitioners in their daily activities is in the constant engagement of companies target audience through feedback. They are also of the opinion that this feedback could be in the form of likes, dislikes, hashtags, and comments on some social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. These are some ways by which PR practitioners can interact with the end users of their products or services.

Guanah *et al* (2020 p, 10) in their work on "AI and Journalism Practice in Edo State" think that there is no doubt that AI may handle news reporting better than human beings because they don't get to experience fatigue like human beings. With AI, news gathering will be cheaper and news can be of better quality because it will eliminate human errors and editing challenges. According to the Researchers, "Automation is the future, hence we have to prepare ourselves to embrace it to compete alongside digitalized nations". Though the utilisation of AI-driven media applications can lead to job loss and the eventual take-over of Nigerian media houses, the fact is that, for now, they may not be a threat because of the myriad problems that the utilization of AI may face. Some of these challenges include the fact that they cannot be natural; they also lack the psychological flow that exists between newscasters and viewers/listeners. With AI, there is no room for negotiation with human beings. Other challenges are poor electricity to effectively power the AI applications, lack of suitable infrastructure and finance to purchase and maintain this equipment. Cultural and socio-economic barriers to adoption, the cost of Internet, and the training of AI handlers also pose a problem.

Akpan *et al.* (2022), notes that technology is helping PR professionals to be more effective in cutting out unnecessary steps. In the past, press releases were developed and distributed individually, now, they are distributed through programs like business wire and constant contact. In Nigeria, most

communication practices are now accepting the new media technology because of the many benefits that comes with it. New media technologies and the challenges of corporate communication practices in Nigeria is a study carried out by Ntuk *et al* (2022) which thinks that the advent of new media technologies has had a significant impact on the practice of communication in today's society. The change in the media world is mostly attributed to the usage of digital devices and the internet.

Mattel *et al*, (2022) undertook research to investigate the role of social media as a government digital PR tool in Nigeria. The study discovered that the national and sub-national government in Nigeria have more than one social media handle. Furthermore, the engagement of both citizens and government institutions rarely uses these social media platforms to relate and communicate government policies. Unlike this research, their study also notes that political personalities are more engaged on social media platforms than the institutions they represent. These political personalities are seen projecting more of their personal views than what the institutions they represent stand for. Social media can be used for feedback on government policies and programmes that will promote good governance and accountability.

Ananyi & Nwosu (2023) examined the utilization of artificial intelligence for enhancing the economic aspects of Nigerian public universities. They noted that while it is important to recognize that the integration of AI in public universities, it should be done with careful consideration of ethical and privacy implications. They submitted that necessary guidelines and policies need to be in place to protect student data, ensure fairness in AI procedures and address any potential biases.

The potential effects of AI on the job market, have also been raised as a source of concern. Possibly, certain jobs might be lost

as a consequence of the widespread use of AI in communication, which makes it possible to automate formerly labor-intensive processes. Hence, it is critical that authorities take precautions to lessen the blow to the economy and workforce that AI may otherwise deal. One solution would be to provide courses that retrain and educate impacted employees. (Essien, Odejide, Okoronkwo, & Afolabi 2024).

### **Theoretical Framework**

To understand the adoption process of AI into PR practice in Nigeria, its impact, and ethical considerations, this study draws upon the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Theory. This is because UTAUT provides more valuable insights into the technology adoption process among PR professionals (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003).

The Use of Technology theory offers a framework for understanding technology adoption by PR professionals. UTAUT proposes four key factors that influence the willingness to adopt new technology: perceived usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and facilitating conditions. By employing UTAUT, this study examined how these factors affect Nigerian PR professionals' willingness to adopt AI, identify challenges and opportunities, and develop recommendations for successful AI adoption.

### **Research Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-method strategy, combining quantitative and qualitative research. It also utilised the survey methodology to gather data from both primary and secondary sources. This combined strategy enabled the researcher to collect comprehensive data and analyse responses to support the attainment of the objectives of the study. This approach was chosen to facilitate the distribution of research instruments, such as questionnaires and Key Informant Interview (KII) guides, to respondents through diverse channels. The

questionnaire served as a means to obtain comprehensive insights from participants regarding the study.

The study used purposive (judgmental) sampling to select 108 PR practitioners out of 150 from Nigeria's six geo-political zones, including Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Abuja, Kano, and Bauchi. Participants were chosen from various sectors, such as corporate organisations, government agencies (States Information officers), PR agencies ( PH Dreams, PR – Nigeria - Kano, Praxis - Enugu, Abuja –PR, Noah's Arc -Lagos, Unimark- Gombe), academia (Select lecturers of University of Jos, Pan Atlantic University - Lagos, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Bayero University, Kano, and Enugu State University), government officials/policymakers (Directors of Information Ministries in Federal Capital Territory Authority- Abuja, Bauchi, Kano, Lagos, Enugu and Port Harcourt) and select media professionals ( from AIT, Arise TV, Nigeria Television Authority, Voice of Nigeria, News Agency of Nigeria, Daily Trust. They were selected based on their strategic and operational roles and their insights were crucial for understanding AI's impact on PR in Nigeria. The study utilised the comprehensive membership register in

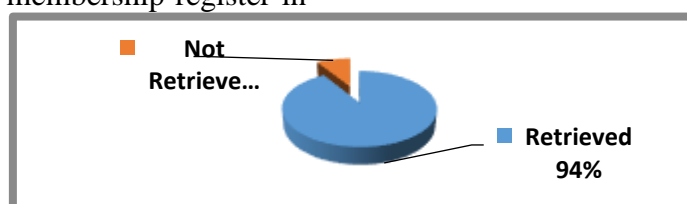
the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) secretariat to identify and access the participants.

The data gathered were analysed using the simple frequency analysis (inferential statistical tools) for the study. Quantitative data is analysed using percentages with the results visually presented through charts and graphs to facilitate interpretations for deduction purposes. Content analysis was employed qualitatively by interpreting the questionnaires and interviews to generate summary statements which encapsulated the main themes identified.

## Data Presentation

### Analysis of Response Rate

A total of 108 questionnaire were administered for the purpose of this study, with 101 responses received, yielding a high response rate of 94 percent. This indicates a strong representation of the sample population and suggests that participants were eager to contribute their insights. The non-response rate of 6 percent is relatively low, providing confidence in the validity and reliability of the study's findings.



**Figure 1: Analysis of Response Rate.**  
Source: Field Survey, 2025

## Demographic Characteristics of

### Respondents

This offers a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including a range of attributes such as their gender, age, educational background, PR work status, years of experience, and current position in the organisation.

The respondents' demographic makeup shows a noticeable gender imbalance, with males making up 61 percent of the sample and females comprising 39 percent. While this distribution indicates a slight bias towards males, it does not compromise the validity of the results. Instead, it reflects the purposive sampling method employed by the researchers during questionnaire administration. The disparity in male-to-

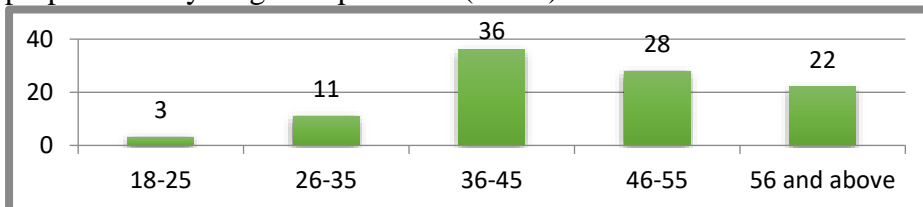
female ratio is merely a consequence of chance, and the findings remain representative of the population under study.



**Figure 2: Gender of Respondents**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 4.3 reveals a clustering of respondents in the 36-45years and 46-55years age brackets, accounting for 64 percent of the sample. This suggests a mature age profile in the population under study. The age distribution shows a small proportion of younger respondents (18-25)

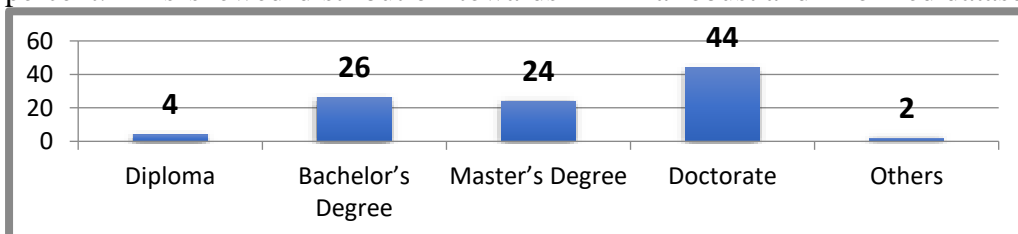
and a notable 22 percent in the 56+ category, indicating a diverse age range. This spread of ages enhances the validity and generalisation of the findings, capturing a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives.



**Figure 3: Age Distribution of Respondents**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 4 indicates that the educational background of the respondents reveals a predominantly highly educated sample, with a significant proportion holding advanced degrees. Doctoral degree holders comprise the largest group, accounting for 44 percent, followed by Bachelor's 26 percent and Master's degree holder's 24 percent. This skewed distribution towards

higher educational attainment lends credibility to the findings, as it suggests that the responses are informed by a high level of expertise and knowledge. The small representation of Diploma 4 percent and others 2 percent categories does not detract from the validity of the results, as the sample's overall educational profile ensures a robust and informed dataset.



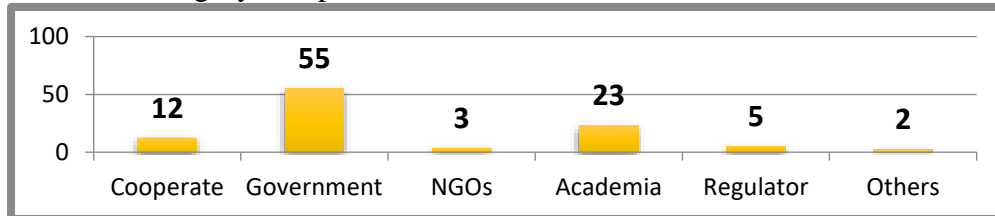
**Figure 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

The Figure 4.5 show that the distribution of respondents' Public Relations (PR) work status reveals a diverse range of professional settings, with a significant

proportion employed in the government sector 55 percent. This is followed by academia 23 percent and corporate sectors 12 percent, ensuring a comprehensive

representation of PR practitioners across various industries. The presence of respondents from regulatory bodies 5 percent and NGOs 3 percent adds to the richness of the dataset, while the small "Others" category 2 percent does not

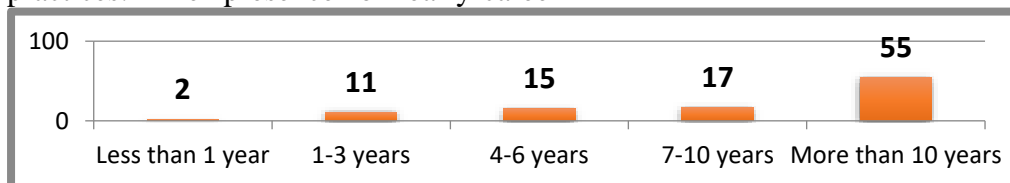
compromise the validity of the findings. This diverse distribution enhances the generality of the results, providing a robust understanding of PR practices and perceptions across multiple contexts.



**Figure 4: PR Work Status of Respondents**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 5 shows that the respondents' years of experience in the PR profession exhibit a positively skewed distribution, with a significant majority 55 percent possessing over a decade of experience. This concentration of seasoned professionals lends substantial credibility to the findings, as their extensive expertise and insight can provide rich, nuanced perspectives on PR practices. The presence of early-career

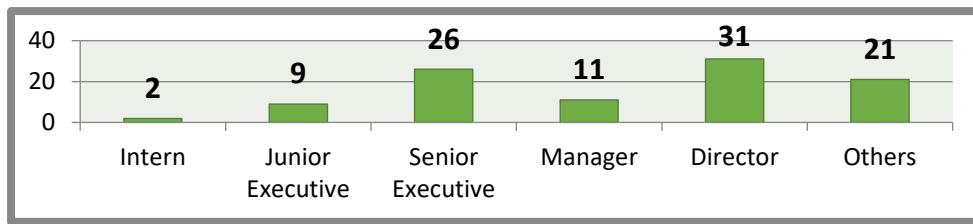
professionals less than one year: 2 percent, 1-3 years: 11 percent and mid-career practitioners 4-6 years: 15 percent, 7-10 years: 17 percent ensures a balance of fresh and established viewpoints, further enhancing the validity and generality of the results. The extensive experience of the majority of respondents underscores the reliability and trustworthiness of the data.



**Figure 5: Years of Experience in Public Relations:**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 5 shows that the respondents' current positions within their organizations reveal a hierarchical distribution, with a significant concentration of senior-level professionals. Directors (31 percent) and Senior Executives (26 percent) comprise the largest groups, indicating a wealth of strategic and leadership perspectives. Managers (11 percent) and Junior Executives (9 percent) add depth to the dataset, while the small number of Interns

(2 percent) may provide fresh, entry-level insights. The "Others" category (21 percent) likely encompasses a range of specialized or unique roles, further enriching the diversity of perspectives. This distribution ensures that the findings are informed by a broad spectrum of organizational experiences and expertise, enhancing the validity and generality of the results.



**Figure 6: Current Position in Organization:**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

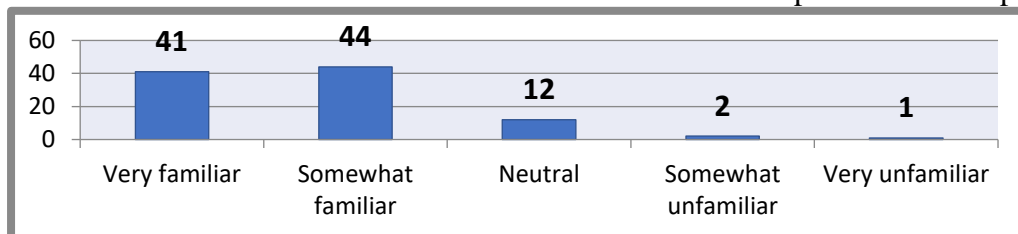
**Empirical Analysis of Field Data**

The analysis of responses gathered from questionnaires, interpreted the data to fulfil the study's objectives and provide insights into the research questions. Specifically, it explores the relationship between artificial intelligence and PR practice in Nigeria. By examining the data, it aims to uncover valuable findings and provide meaningful answers to the research questions.

**Assessment of the Level of knowledge of Artificial Intelligence Technology among Public Relations Practitioners in Nigeria**

It explores the extent to which Public PR practitioners in Nigeria are aware of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and its applications in the field. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 85

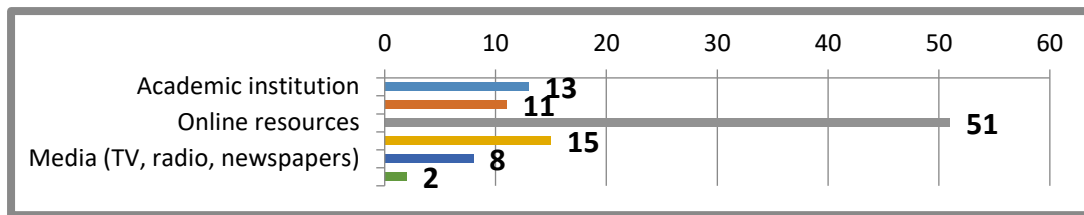
percent, reported being either very or somewhat familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, as shown in Figure 7. This significant majority indicates a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding, lending credibility to the findings. The small percentages of neutral, somewhat unfamiliar, and very unfamiliar responses ensure a diverse range of perspectives, preventing the results from being skewed towards only expert opinions. This distribution validates the reliability of the data, providing a robust basis for exploring AI technology and its implications. Furthermore, the majority of interviewees in the Key Informant Interviews (KII) corroborated this assertion, stating that they are quite familiar with the concept of AI, particularly in the context of public relations practice.



**Figure 7: How familiar are you with Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology?**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 8 show that the respondents' primary sources of introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology reveal a diverse range of learning environments. Online resources emerge as the dominant channel, with 51 percent of respondent's first learning about AI through this medium. This suggests a self-directed and proactive approach to learning about AI, underscoring the accessibility and prevalence of online information. Academic institutions and workplaces also

play significant roles, accounting for 13 percent and 11 percent of respondents, respectively. Conferences, seminars, and media outlets further contribute to the dissemination of AI knowledge, while a small percentage of respondents cite other sources. This varied distribution validates the widespread interest in AI and highlights the multiple pathways through which individuals can engage with this technology.

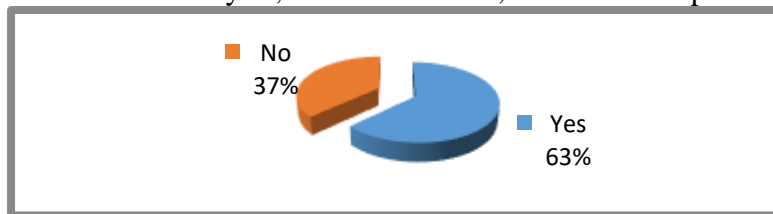


**Figure 8: Where did you first learn about AI technology?**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 9 indicates that a significant majority of respondents (63 percent) have utilised Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in their PR work, demonstrating a notable adoption rate of AI technology in the field. This affirmative response suggests that PR practitioners recognize the value and potential of AI in enhancing their work, such as data analysis, content creation, and

media monitoring. The 37 percent who have not used AI tools may indicate a need for further education or training, or a reliance on traditional methods. Nonetheless, the majority's positive response validates the growing importance of AI in PR, highlighting its potential to augment professional practices and improve outcomes.



**Figure 9: Have you ever used AI tools in your Public Relations work?**

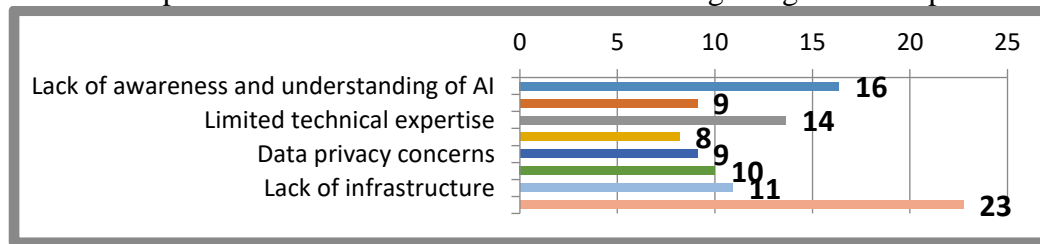
Source: Field Survey, 2025

### Obstacles Impeding the Incorporation of AI in Public Relations Practice in Nigeria

This Section of the field study examines the challenges and barriers hindering the adoption and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Public Relations (PR) practice in Nigeria. The adoption of AI in PR practice faces numerous obstacles, as depicted in Figure 10. A significant 23 percent of respondents identified a combination of challenges as the primary hurdle, highlighting the complexity of the issue. Key knowledge-based barriers include a lack of awareness and understanding of AI (16 percent) and limited technical expertise (14 percent), financial and resource constraints, high cost of AI technology (9 percent) and lack of infrastructure (11 percent), pose significant challenges. Human-centered concerns, including resistance to change from employees (8 percent), ethical

considerations (10 percent), and data privacy concerns (9 percent), also need to be addressed. These findings were corroborated by industry experts, including the CEO of AyRah Media Concept Ltd, a PR firm in Kano, who emphasized that the obstacles to AI adoption in PR practice cannot be overstated. The CEO highlighted lack of infrastructure, awareness, technical know-how, and resistance to change as major challenges. Similarly, the Deputy Registrar and Head of the Public Relations Department at ATBU, Bauchi, shared the same opinion, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to address these multifaceted challenges. The President of NIPR at the Abuja Headquarters noted that digital skills gap is largely responsible for the slow pace in the adoption of AI in PR practice in Nigeria. He said training programmes are already being planned by the NIPR to bridge the gap among practitioners in Nigeria. Chairpersons of

NIPR in Port Harcourt and Lagos, both identified poor AI infrastructure and resistance to change as obstacles against integrating AI in PR practice.



**Figure 10: What do you perceive as the Main Obstacles to Incorporating AI in Public Relations practice? Source: Field Survey, 2025**

**Table 1: Perceived Significance of Obstacles to AI adoption in Public Relations Practice (1 = Not significant, 5 = Very significant)**

SN	Assessment of the Level of Significance of Obstacle	1	2	3	4	5	Total %
1	Lack of awareness and understanding of AI	0	0	13	33	54	100
2	High cost of AI technology	0	0	8	42	50	100
3	Limited technical expertise	0	0	12	37	51	100
4	Resistance to change from employees	0	0	21	33	46	100
5	Data privacy concerns	5	6	16	29	44	100
6	Ethical considerations	2	4	13	33	48	100
7	Lack of infrastructure	0	0	10	40	50	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The Table 1 above shows the respondents' perceptions of the significance of obstacles to AI adoption in PR practice reveal a nuanced landscape. A majority of respondents (54 percent) consider lack of awareness and understanding of AI to be a highly significant obstacle, followed closely by limited technical expertise (51 percent) and lack of infrastructure (50 percent). High cost of AI technology (50 percent) and ethical considerations (48 percent) also emerge as substantial barriers. Resistance to change from employees (46 percent) and data privacy concerns (44 percent) are seen as moderately significant, with a smaller proportion of respondents viewing them as highly significant. The widespread recognition of these obstacles underscores their impact on AI adoption in PR, validating the need for targeted strategies to address these challenges and facilitate effective integration of AI technologies.

### Assessment of the Potential Benefits Associated with Integrating AI Into Public Relations Practice and How They Can Be Optimized

This revealed the potential benefits of integrating AI into PR practice, exploring how AI can enhance PR outcomes, improve efficiency, and drive innovation. It also examines strategies for optimizing these benefits, including leveraging AI for data-driven insights, streamlining processes, and augmenting creative capabilities. By assessing the potential benefits and optimization strategies, this section aims to provide a roadmap for PR practitioners to harness the power of AI and revolutionize their practice.

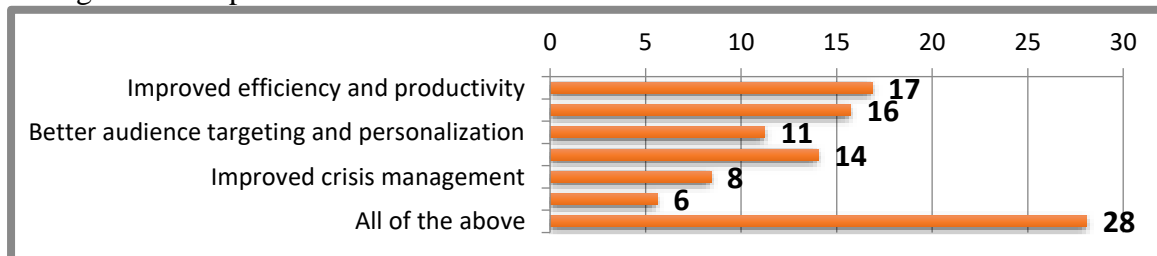
Figure 11 shows that the integration of AI in PR practice is poised to yield numerous benefits, according to respondents. The majority (28 percent) envision a comprehensive range of advantages, encompassing all of the above options.

Improved efficiency and productivity (17 percent) and enhanced data analysis and insights (16%) emerge as prominent benefits. It highlights AI's potential to streamline processes and inform data-driven decision-making. Better audience targeting and personalization (11 percent) and cost savings (14 percent) also feature prominently. The factors underscores AI's capacity to optimize PR efforts and reduce expenditures. Improved crisis management (8 percent) and enhanced creativity and innovation (6 percent) are seen as additional benefits. They demonstrate AI's potential to augment PR's strategic and creative dimensions. These findings validate the transformative potential of AI in PR, emphasizing its ability to drive progress and innovation in the field. To corroborate this assertion, the University Public Relations Officer, Enugu State University stated in a KII interview that:

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Public Relations (PR) practice holds promising benefits. AI can enhance data analysis, enabling PR professionals to make informed decisions and tailor their strategies to specific audiences. AI-

powered tools can also streamline tasks, such as media monitoring and content creation, increasing efficiency and productivity. Additionally, AI can facilitate personalized communication, improve crisis management, and provide valuable insights for reputation management. Overall, AI integration has the potential to revolutionize PR practice, making it more effective, efficient, and data-driven.

In another KII with the Secretary of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in Enugu, he highlighted the potential benefits of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Public Relations practice as a groundbreaking development for the field. He emphasized that AI has the capacity to significantly advance the PR profession, providing cutting-edge facilities that will enhance the technological capabilities of PR officers. This, in turn, will enable them to be on par with their counterparts in other professions, thereby promoting technological advancement and excellence in the field of Public Relations.

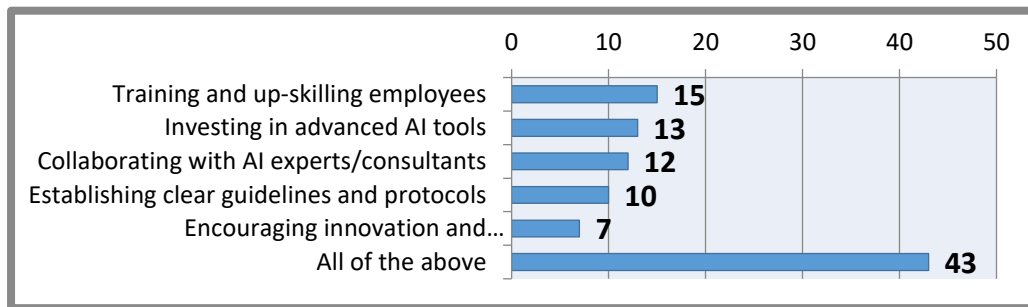


**Figure 11: What potential benefits do you foresee with the integration of AI in Public Relations practice? Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Figure 11 show that optimizing the benefits of AI in PR practice requires a multifaceted approach, according to respondents. The majority (43 percent) advocate for a comprehensive strategy encompassing all of the above options. Training and upskilling employees (15 percent) emerge as a crucial step, ensuring that PR professionals possess the necessary expertise to effectively leverage AI. Investing in advanced AI tools (13 percent) and collaborating with AI

experts/consultants (12 percent) also feature prominently, highlighting the importance of accessing cutting-edge technology and specialized knowledge. Establishing clear guidelines and protocols (10 percent) provides a framework for AI adoption, while encouraging innovation and experimentation (7 percent) fosters a culture of creativity and continuous improvement. By adopting these strategies, PR practitioners could unlock the full

potential of AI and drive meaningful outcomes in their work.



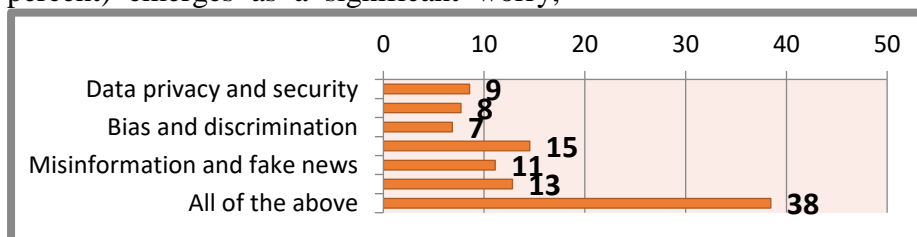
**Figure 12: How can these benefits be optimized?**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2025

### Ethical Considerations in AI Adoption: Navigating the Moral Landscape of Public Relations Practice in Nigeria

This section of the field analysis explores the ethical concerns and moral implications of employing AI in PR practice in Nigeria, including issues related to data privacy, transparency, accountability, and potential biases. It aims to identify and address the ethical challenges that arise when integrating AI into PR, ensuring that practitioners prioritize responsible and ethical AI adoption in their work.

Figure 13 shows that the use of AI in PR raises a plethora of ethical concerns, with respondents citing a range of issues. The majority (38 percent) express apprehensions across all the above-mentioned areas. Job displacement (15 percent) emerges as a significant worry,

highlighting fears that AI could automate roles and displace human professionals. Lack of human touch in communications (13 percent) and misinformation and fake news (11 percent) also feature prominently, underscoring concerns about AI's potential to erode personal connections and perpetuate falsehoods. Data privacy and security (9 percent), transparency and accountability (8 percent), and bias and discrimination (7 percent) are also notable concerns, emphasizing the need for safeguards to prevent AI from infringing on individuals' rights and perpetuating harmful biases. These findings validate the importance of addressing ethical considerations in AI adoption, ensuring responsible and transparent integration of AI in public relations practice.



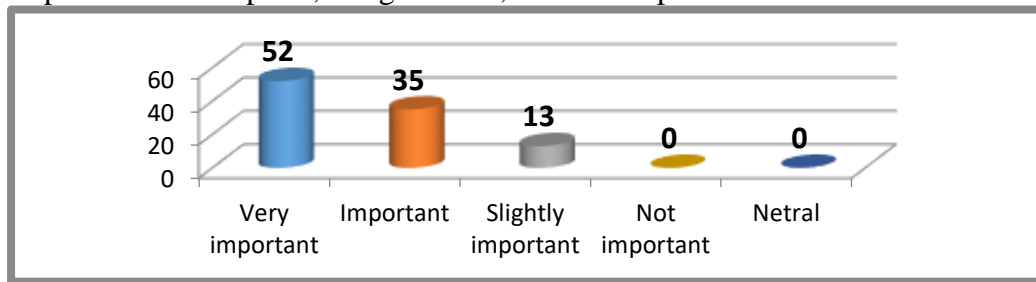
**Figure 13: What ethical concerns do you have regarding the use of AI in public relations?** Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 14 show that an overwhelming majority of respondents (87 percent) consider it crucial to address the ethical concerns surrounding AI in public relations, with 52 percent deeming it "very important" and 35 percent considering it "important". This consensus underscores

the recognition of AI's potential impact on individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. The remaining 13 percent view addressing ethical concerns as "slightly important", while none of the respondents consider it "not important" or are "neutral" on the matter. This resounding emphasis on

addressing ethical concerns validates the need for proactive measures to ensure responsible AI adoption, mitigate risks, and

promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI-driven public relations practices.



**Figure 14: How important is it to address these ethical concerns?**

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

### Discussion of Findings

In line with objective one, the research findings revealed the level of awareness of AI technology among PR practitioners in Nigeria to be relatively fair. Majority of the PR practitioners demonstrated an above average understanding of its concepts and applications. This is evident from the fact that many PR professionals in Nigeria recognised the potential of AI to transform the industry. They are also eager to leverage its capabilities to enhance PR practice. This finding aligns with the research of Mattel *et al.*, (2022) who confirmed that most PR officers and organisations have integrated AI in their activities in Nigeria. Furthermore, the engagement of both citizens and government institutions rarely uses these social media platforms to relate and communicate government policies. Unlike this research, their study also notes that political. However, there is need for the practitioners' continuous training to deepen their understanding in order to harness the full potential of AI in PR.

Furthermore, in objective two, major obstacles identified by the study include limited technical expertise, lack of awareness, high costs of AI technologies, inadequate infrastructure and resistance to change. This finding supports the work of Huang *et al.*, (2023) who were of the opinion that AI application especially in developing countries can suffer setbacks because of lack technological infrastructure to support the system.

Regarding objective three, the study noted that AI in PR offers significant advantages such as improved efficiency, enhanced data analysis, better audience targeting and crisis management. The respondents highlighted the potential for AI to streamline PR processes and improve decision-making. This supports the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Theory. The coming of AI has simplify the task of most PR practitioners. They can now undertake assignments with ease and relaxation knowing fully well that they can be aided by various AI applications to reduce stress. *et al.*, 2003).

Research objective four investigated ethical concerns that should be considered when deploying AI in PR practice in Nigeria? The study identified various ethical issues, including concerns about job displacement, data privacy, misinformation and the lack of human touch in AI-driven communication. To address these concerns, PR practitioners in Nigeria could prioritize transparency, accountability and fairness in their use of AI and ensure that they are compliant with relevant data protection regulations.

### Conclusion

The findings from this study indicates that, by incorporating AI into PR practices in Nigeria, professionals can gain the ability to target audiences more precisely, personalise communication and make data-

driven decisions. AI-powered tools can also streamline tasks, such as media monitoring and content creation, increasing efficiency and productivity.

In the Nigeria context, PR play a critical role in navigating the intricate socio-political landscape and dynamic business environment. Nigeria's diverse population, cultural nuances and evolving media landscape present both challenges and opportunities for PR practitioners. Effective PR strategies in Nigeria should consider cultural sensitivities, political dynamics and technology to engage successfully with diverse stakeholders and maintain their organisation's reputation (Ojo, 2019).

The study offers the following recommendations that can be considered in promoting the integration of AI in PR practice in Nigeria.

1. The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria, should provide training and capacity-building programs for PR practitioners on AI applications and tools. The government should also invest in

digital infrastructure and provide access to AI tools and software for PR practitioners.

2. Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) should promote knowledge/awareness and understanding of AI benefits and its application among practitioners through public education campaigns.
3. Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in liaison with the Federal Ministry of Education, should develop and implement AI-related curricula in PR education programs.
4. Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in collaboration with the Federal Government should establish a regulatory framework for AI use in PR practice to address the ethical concerns.
5. Federal Government should provide incentives for private organisations to invest in AI infrastructure and resources.

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