

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Francis Sunday Lema & Woyopwa Shem

Department of Mass Communication, University of Jos, Plateau State.
lemanf@unijos.edu.ng; Shem.woyopwa@tsuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

Sustainable development has become a central global development priority, particularly following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015. Despite this global commitment, Nigeria continues to experience persistent developmental challenges such as poverty, inequality, corruption, and environmental degradation. Strategic communication, particularly public relations (PR), has increasingly been identified as a potential mechanism for promoting sustainable development through stakeholder engagement, behavioural change communication, and policy advocacy. However, existing studies on the relationship between public relations and sustainable development in Nigeria remain fragmented across disciplines. This study therefore conducts a systematic literature review to examine the role of public relations as a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach and guided by PRISMA procedures, the study synthesised empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025 in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. A total of 450 articles were initially retrieved, out of which 59 met the established inclusion criteria and were subjected to thematic analysis. The findings reveal that public relations in Nigeria is increasingly conceptualised as a strategic communication function that emphasises stakeholder engagement, development communication, and behavioural influence rather than its traditional publicity role. The literature also indicates that research on PR and sustainable development in Nigeria largely focuses on three key dimensions: social sustainability, economic sustainability, and environmental sustainability, with social sustainability receiving the greatest scholarly attention. Despite the growing body of research, significant gaps remain, particularly in theoretical integration and empirical measurement of communication outcomes on development indicators. The review concludes that while PR has strong potential to support sustainable development initiatives in Nigeria, future studies should adopt more rigorous theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches to better establish the link between strategic communication and measurable development outcomes.

Keywords: Public Relations; Sustainable Development; Strategic Communication; Stakeholder Engagement; Nigeria.

Introduction

Globally, sustainable development has emerged as a non-negotiable aspect of development in both developed and developing countries (United Nations, 2015; Griggs et al., 2017; Le Blanc, 2015). The non-negotiable nature of sustainable development is associated with its potential to meet the needs of the present generation without jeopardising those of future generations (Le Blanc, 2015; Griggs et al., 2017). In other words, sustainable development stands the test of time; hence, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations in the year 2015 (United Nations, 2015). However, despite the existence of the Sustainable Development Goals, which officially started on January 1, 2016, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by world leaders at the United Nations Summit in September 2015, developing countries, especially Nigeria is still battling with numerous developmental challenges, ranging from economic growth to social inequality, corruption, poverty, and climate-related issues, among others (Adenuga et al., 2025; Shenkoya, 2022; Nwogbo & Ighodalo, 2021). Over the years, there have been numerous interventions and policy frameworks to address these issues; however, the outcome of these interventions and programmes remains frail and ineffective as these challenges persist (Damoah, 2018; Oluseye, 2024). This situation, therefore, questions the significance of strategic communication, especially public relations, in advocating for sustainable development initiatives.

Public relations has evolved and proven to be an inevitable development advocacy tool that has the potency to bring about behavioural change, mobilise citizen participation in developmental programmes, and also foster development-related collaboration between the government, corporation, civil society and local communities (Chaka & Adanlawo,

2022; Were, Ojiambo, & Ndeti, 2025). Public relations, according to Taylor and Kent (2006) can influence the way development issues are prioritised, interpreted and acted upon. It is apt to note that in a country like Nigeria, where most development interventions are bedevilled by resistance, which often emanates from the people's belief system, public relations has the potential to encourage wide acceptance of developmental policies and behavioural change interventions (Elmond, 2025; Garba, Shekobagu & Muhammad, 2024).

Despite the aforementioned potential of public relations in promoting sustainable development, its deployment in Nigeria remains problematic. The problematic nature of public relations in advancing sustainable development in Nigeria emanates from the nature of development communication efforts that are mostly top-down, and also the episodic nature of development campaigns (Eyo, 2025; Ogbonnaya, 2024; Sule, 2023). The aforementioned issues are compounded by other structural constraints such as political interference, information divide, and the media system (Eyo, 2025; Sule, 2023; Ashby-King, 2025). Therefore, the advocacy potential of public relations as a tool for sustainable development has not been fully harnessed (Eyo, 2025; Sule, 2023; Ashby-King, 2025).

Aside from the afore identified issues, extant literature on public relations and sustainable development in Nigeria remains lopsided and disjointed (Adeola & Adeola, 2019; Sule & Ridwanullah, 2023). Even though there is a trail of research interest and published studies in areas such as public health communication, corporate social responsibility, environmental communication, and governance, these studies are largely dispersed across disciplines and lack systematic integration (Iyinoluwa, Ismail, & Emmanuel E, 2023; Adeola & Adeola, 2019). There still exists a paucity of synthesised empirical evidence that holistically explores the place of public

relations in promoting sustainable development results within the Nigerian context (Sule & Ridwanullah, 2023; Iyinoluwa et al., 2023). The above creates a gap that has the potential to limit holistic knowledge of the subject matter and also constrain the development of contextually grounded theories and practice-oriented frameworks (Adeola & Adeola, 2019; Iyinoluwa et al., 2023). It is therefore in light of the above that this study responds to this gap by conducting a systematic literature review of empirical studies on public relations and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

RQ1: How has public relations been conceptualised in relation to sustainable development in Nigeria?

RQ2: What sustainable development dimensions are most frequently addressed in the literature? RQ3: What gaps exist in the literature on public relations and sustainable development?

Methodology

This research adopts the Systematic Literature Review Design (SLR). According to Lame (2019), the Systematic Literature Review Design (SLR) is a design that basically deals with synthesising published scientific studies with the aim of answering specific research questions in a clear and repeatable manner. Put differently, the Systematic Literature Review Design (SLR) enables the research to scientifically collect, synthesise, and analyse extant studies to answer specific research questions that guide future researchers.

In this study, the researcher synthesises extant studies on public relations and sustainable development in Nigeria published in Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar from 2016 to 2025. The above academic databases were selected because

they contain rich, broad, and credible published studies that are relevant to the subject matter under investigation.

Search Strategy: To have access to relevant extant studies, the researchers employed a thorough search strategy. A search was conducted with the following search strings: "public relations Nigeria," "sustainable development Nigeria," "corporate social responsibility Nigeria," "SDGs Nigeria," "development communication," and "stakeholder engagement." In the same vein, the researchers used combined search terms using Boolean operators such as (public relations) AND (sustainable development OR corporate social responsibility OR SDGs) AND (Nigeria). The search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The rationale behind using these databases is that they are regarded as some of the most reliable sources due to their strict policies and procedures for content selection, which guarantee that only the best content is indexed. Additionally, these databases offer rich, important, and easily accessible data about the subject matter under investigation.

Study Selection: The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines were followed by the researchers to select the research studies to include in the analysis. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA flowchart that coincides with the review process.

To collect relevant data/literature, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established by the researcher. A total of four hundred and fifty articles were retrieved (450), out of which fifty nine (59) met the inclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria were: studies must be published in Scopus-, Web of Science-, or Google Scholar-indexed journals; studies must contain the words "public relations" of any of the themes – sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, or SDGs, or the words appear in the 'keywords' section; studies must focus on Nigeria; content

concentrates on public relations and sustainable development, and the studies are published in the English language. Conversely, the exclusion criteria for this study include the following: the paper is a duplicate of an already included paper in the study sample; concentrates majorly on other fields outside communication and public relations; the paper is not published in an academic journal indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or Google Scholar, and if the subject or focus of the published work is not on one or all of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, and SDGs.

It is appropriate to mention that the researchers limited the scope of their search to peer-reviewed articles published in the English language between 2016 and 2025.

Results

In this section, we present the findings of this study in a thematic fashion, which aligns with the study's objectives.

How Public Relations Has Been Conceptualised in Relation to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The first objective of this study is to explore how public relations has been conceptualised in relation to sustainable development in Nigeria. A shred of evidence from extant studies suggests that most studies consistently conceptualise public relations beyond its traditional function, including publicity and media. Most empirical studies conceptualise public relations as a strategic communication, which includes stakeholder engagement, reputation management, behavioural influence, and development communication processes (Elmond, 2025; Ekanem, Umoh & Oyokunyi, 2025; Ikemefuna, Igyuve & Ogande, 2025; Eyo & Onyewuchi, 2025; Ihunwo, Amadi & Nsereka, 2020).

Contemporary empirical studies have reconceptualised public relations as a multidimensional and veritable tool that has the potency to promote sustainable

development (Ekwunife, et al, 2024 Ejiofo, 2023; Mmutle, 2023; Ibe & Chinyere, 2023). This conceptualisation views public relations beyond its traditional function to a more strategic tool that has the potency to influence behavioural change, foster civic engagement, and promote the development agenda in Nigeria (Nwanmuoh, 2020; George, Brown, & Ekpe, 2025; Ejiofo & Udu, 2023). This implies that public relations activities extend to designing messages that are capable of addressing development issues that revolved around public health, environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation, and educational initiatives (Nnabuko & Onyiaji, 2021; Nmere, et al, 2020; Tanyishi, 2025). The above function of public relations, if carried out aptly, is expected to align and also incorporate governmental communication strategies with the broader goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The above suggests the need for public relations practices to shift toward a transformative communication approach that aims at achieving long-term social impact (Ekanem, Umoh & Oyokunyi, 2025; Ikemefuna, Igyuve & Ogande, 2025).

Furthermore, extant studies also pinpointed the significance of a stakeholder-oriented approach in public relations for sustainable development. Most of these studies revealed that strategic engagement with diverse actors, which include government agencies, non-governmental organisations, community leaders, and the media, is central to the conceptualisation of public relations within the developmental context (Eyo & Onyewuchi, 2025; Ihunwo, Amadi & Nsereka, 2020). This suggests that public relations practitioners would be able to facilitate dialogue, mobilise resources, and enhance the legitimacy of development projects through building relationships and networks.

Additionally, empirical literature indicates that development communication, which is strategic communication used to inform,

educate, and empower populations, is another recurring theme in the conceptualisation of PR towards sustainable development. PR is regarded as playing a key role in influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour change towards sustainable practices, including environmental conservation, compliance with social health, and social inclusion (Ijese, Kente & Akase, 2025; Adams et al, 2023; Nnabuko & Onyiaji, 2021; Nmere et al, 2020; Tanyishi, 2025). This is in line with the extended theoretical foundations of PR as a management process that can fill the gap between institutional goals and societal needs, making it clear that the field goes beyond its classical frontiers of media relations and emerges as a catalyst for national growth. From the foregoing, the literature highlights the fact that the conceptualisation of public relations in Nigeria has gradually been driven towards a strategic, socially responsible and development-oriented practice

Sustainable Development Dimensions Most Frequently Addressed

Evidence from extant studies published between 2016 and 2025 revealed that in Nigeria, the subject of public relations and sustainable development is mostly examined in three core intertwined dimensions: social sustainability, economic sustainability, and environmental sustainability. The aforementioned dimension coincides with the sustainability framework, which was institutionalised through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is apt to state that, throughout the literature reviewed, PR is conceptualised as a strategic communication process that defines stakeholder engagement, legitimacy building, and development discourse. Nevertheless, amongst the aforementioned dimensions, there are systematic trends of unequal scholarly focus. Social sustainability received the dominant attention, followed by economic sustainability and, finally,

environmental sustainability.

Social Sustainability Dimension

The reviewed literature revealed that social sustainability is one of the areas that received a trail of research interest and publications in extant corpora. In other words, since 2016, researchers have been placing PR in the context of participatory development communication increasingly, especially within the context of public enlightenment, behavioural change campaigns, governance communication, and social inclusion programmes (Ajala & Igbokwe, 2019; Elmond, 2025; Obasi & Ubani, 2024; Aribisala, Samson, & Chinenye, (2025) have shown that awareness-based campaigns that include health communication, electoral education, and civic participation are widespread in terms of public relations practices. Equally, Salawu (2018) and Omojola (2017) suggest that agenda construction and stakeholder mobilisation are influenced by communication structure and determine the results of development (Omojola, 2017; Dike, 2024).

Stakeholder dialogue and engagement are also discussed as one of the key components of sustainable communication practice in extant studies (Ekanem, Umoh, & Oyokunyi, 2025; Dike, 2024). Similarly, Omojola (2019), Okorie (2017), and Nwabueze (2020) observe that PR activities are becoming rationalised with the incorporation of digital platforms to improve communication with the community and delivery of messages (Salau, Oyesomi, & Oyedepo, 2020). In this direction, the research done by digital communication scholars in Nigeria proves that interactive media platforms enhance the quality of engagement and participatory communication (Okafor, Amadi, & Dike, 2025; Aribisala et al., 2025).

Investigations that concentrate on the advocacy of Sustainable Development Goals also indicate that PR can play an important role in the social awareness campaign (Obasi

& Ubani, 2024; Ajala & Igbokwe, 2019; Dike, 2024). In Nigeria, empirical research by Elmond (2025) and Obasi & Ubani (2024) and Salau et al. (2020) affirms that social sustainability is mainly supported by public relations in terms of enlightenment campaigns as opposed to quantifiable behavioural changes.

Economic Sustainability Dimension

The second most prevailing theme in the studies reviewed is economic sustainability, which is mostly facilitated by corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder management research. Between 2016 and 2025, theorists are moving towards a more conceptualisation of PR as a strategic management role that fosters the alignment of corporate legitimacy and sustainable development goals (Amaeshi et al., 2016; Adegbite et al., 2018; Idemudia, 2017; Oloruntola and Omojola, 2018).

The Nigerian context has good empirical foundation of CSR communication literatures in supporting this dimension. Research by Olanrewaju and Okorie (2019), Ekhareafu and Obanor (2018), and Adeyeye (2016) indicates that corporate organisations employ PR strategies, which are used to convey developmental contributions in terms of infrastructure support, education programmes, and poverty alleviation programmes. In a similar vein, the authors provide evidence that corporate-community communication has a major impact on the results of economic sustainability in the resource-based industries (Idemudia, 2017).

Additional studies on Nigeria support the relationship between PR and sustainable economic performance in the frameworks of stakeholder engagement and corporate legitimacy (Oyesomi, Oyero, and Okorie, 2020; Oloruntola and Omojola, 2018). Oyesomi, Oyero and Okorie (2020) and Oloruntola and Omojola (2018) affirm that digital stakeholder engagement is increasingly becoming an economic actor

based on interactive communication channels in Nigeria.

Although the research on CSR-related issues is quite high, the literature reveals that economic sustainability is viewed mostly in terms of the reputation of organisations and perception by the stakeholders but not the quantifiable macro-indicators of development. This implies that the conceptualisation of sustainability in terms of PR research continues to be restricted to organisational types of sustainability as opposed to national development outcomes.

Dimensions of Environment sustainability

The least presented dimension in the reviewed literature is environmental sustainability, though there has been an incremental presence of the same between 2016 and 2025. The majority of the studies related to the environmental focus are located in the sphere of environmental communication and extractive industry CSR research (Idemudia, 2017; Olaniran and Williams, 2017).

Idemudia (2017), Olaniran and Williams (2017) discuss the application of the strategies of public relations to address the environmental conflict by oil and gas organisations and sustain the legitimacy of the community. Through these studies, it has been identified that communication strategies are sometimes reactive and reputation oriented but they are not sustainability oriented. The literature in the recent past is also discussing climate communication and environmental advocacy (Nisbet, 2016; Moser, 2016). Research by Nisbet (2016) and Moser (2016) conducted in Nigeria further shows that the environmental awareness campaign was slowly acquiring scholarly interest, especially waste management and climate education.

Nevertheless, the literature always states that environmental sustainability is still under-theorised and fragmented in contrast to social

and economic ones. Most studies focus on awareness campaigns of the environment without relating communication strategies to quantifiable ecological performances (Nejo, Odiboh, Omokiti, & Adeluwa, 2020; Nmere, Okolo, Okechukwu, & Alio, 2020; Gbenga, Aimiomode, Seluman, & Inu, 2023). This observation implies that there is a significant gap in the application of the public relations theory in relation to environmental sustainability metrics.

Gaps and Implications for Future Research

One of the most significant themes that emerged during the systematic review is the fact that strategic public relations is viewed as an engine of sustainable development communication. In the entire literature published since 2016 to 2025, the Nigerian scholarship has categorically placed public relations as a multidimensional communication process which aids in behaviour change, stakeholder participation and policy alignment towards sustainability outputs. Research is beginning to associate PR practice with the structure of Sustainable Development Goals that the United Nations is promoting, especially concerning social awareness campaigns, corporate social responsibility efforts, and media advocacy oriented towards development (Servaes & Oyedemi, 2016; Salawu & Ojebuyi, 2016; Omojola, 2016; Oloruntola, 2016).

In this prevailing theme, there are gaps in theory that are still visible. Though a number of studies have been conducted in Nigeria where stakeholder theory, development communication and agenda-setting are recognised, empirical operationalisation of these theories is minimal. Quite a bit of the literature frames public relations as an awareness creation mechanism without adequately modelling any measurable improvement in sustainability (Asemah et al., 2018; Nwabueze, 2018; Oyesomi et al., 2018; Omojola & Oloruntola, 2018). Recent

research has started to focus on strategic communication integration and digital engagement processes, but theoretical development in consolidating the relationship between PR metrics and development indicators is not well developed (Oyesomi et al., 2019; Capriotti et al., 2019; Nwammuo & Ekwugha, 2019; Edegoh et al., 2019).

In terms of methodology, the literature reveals that it heavily relies on survey and qualitative perception-based research, especially in the investigation of the process of CSR communication, media campaigns, and stakeholder engagement (Oyesomi et al., 2020; Oloruntola & Omojola, 2020; Asemah & Edegoh, 2020). Although these methods make the context, they often do not include longitudinal communication impacts or behavioural outcomes related to sustainable development programmes. New literature has also suggested mixed-methods research that embraces content analysis, experimental paradigms, and digital analytics to reinforce causal explanation (Oyesomi et al., 2021; Omojola, 2021; Nwabueze, 2021).

The other facet of the prevailing theme has to do with contextual restriction in the Nigerian sustainability communication studies. The majority of the researches are urban-based and corporate-oriented, and little empirical evidence exists in the form of studies on gram-root communication systems, environmental sustainability promotions, and community-driven models of participation (Oyesomi et al., 2022; Oloruntola, 2022). The studies of digital transformation are proliferating, especially those that investigate social media advocacy and online stakeholder engagement, but there is still a lack of integration between digital communication results and national development indicators (Oyesomi et al., 2023; Omojola & Salawu, 2024).

Together, the analysed literature may indicate how future studies can reinforce the strategic PR-sustainable development nexus by providing theory-based and empirical

models that can quantify the communication impact on social, economic, and environmental levels. Longitudinal and cross-sectoral designs are especially required in order to make forward strides in the empirical knowledge about the role of PR in the developmental results in Nigeria. Enhancing methodological rigour and incorporating measures of stakeholder engagement, analytics of digital communication, and sustainability indicators will make a big difference to the theoretical contribution and practice of PR to the national development communication environment.

Discussion

The results of this systematic review enhance the current academic knowledge of PR as a strategic communication tool to promote sustainable development in Nigeria. In the analysed research, it is established consistently that PR has shifted out of the conventional publicity emphasis towards a more developmental framework based on stakeholder engagement, behavioural communication, and policy advocacy. This change is indicative of greater changes in global communications on sustainability agendas under the United Nations.

Among the most important theoretical implications of the findings is the one associated with Agenda-Setting Theory. Several studies that have been conducted in Nigeria to illustrate the fact that in Nigeria, the public relations campaigns have become more decisive in the way development matters are ranked in publicity. As an example, Oyesomi, Oyero, and Okorie (2020) and Oloruntola and Omojola (2018) demonstrate that the types of public relations strategies employed in the field of governance, as well as in corporate communication, often influence media discourse on health awareness, civic engagement, and poverty reduction.

However, in the same vein, Asemah and Edegoh (2017) disclose that electoral participation and health awareness campaigns are all dependent on the structured communication strategies that put the development issues on the national agenda. The findings support the agenda-making role of PR, especially in development situations in which media coverage has a direct impact on audience interest.

Immediately linked with this is the applicability of Development Communication Theory to the explanation of the hegemonic orientation of the practices in public relations that have been identified during the review. As suggested in the literature, it is noted that the majority of researchers take a conceptualisation of public relations as a device of aiding the public to be enlightened as well as influencing their behaviour. Nwabueze (2018) and Salawu and Ojebuyi (2016) show that health communication, education advocacy, and governance transparency are some of the most common social sustainability concerns used in PR campaigns in Nigeria. Such studies conclude that communication strategies tend to be structured to inform and mobilise people and not to enhance institutional visibility. The results, however, also indicate that a significant proportion of campaigns is still awareness-based without longitudinal evaluation of behavioural effects, which indicates a disconnect between the exposure of communications and long-term social transformation.

The patterns found in the literature reviewed also have a solid explanatory base through the Stakeholder Theory. According to many studies, stakeholder engagement in PR activities in Nigeria is becoming an important focus due to its potential to lead to the legitimacy and acceptance of development. As an example, Ihunwo, Amadi, and Nsereka (2020) emphasise the importance of interaction between government agencies, corporations,

and community organisations in enabling developmental projects. Likewise, Idemudia (2017) demonstrates that corporate communication in the oil and gas industry has a substantial impact on the outcomes of cooperation with communities and economic sustainability. These results indicate that PR is a relationship management framework that links institutional development objectives and social expectations. The prevalence of social sustainability in the literature reviewed also confirms the relevance of participatory communication models in the study of Nigerian PR. In the works of Okunna (2018) and Oyesomi, Salawu, and Olorunyomi (2019), it is shown that PR campaigns are becoming more interdependent on digital platforms to increase interaction and community involvement. This is in line with the emerging digital stakeholder engagement studies that reveal that interactive communication enhances processes of disseminating messages and attracting audience feedback. However, the review demonstrates that digital engagement indicators are frequently quantified in terms of reach and interaction, rather than real development outcomes, which suggests that more robust empirical models are required between communication performance and sustainability indicators.

The second most studied dimension is economic sustainability, which is achieved through communicating a corporate social responsibility. Studies by Adegbite, Amaeshi, and Nakajima (2018) and Olanrewaju and Okorie (2019) confirm that PR strategies are adopted by organisations in Nigeria to communicate developmental benefits including infrastructure projects and educational support programmes. Although these studies show the reputational advantages of CSR communication they also show a conceptual weakness. The majority of the analysis is concentrated on organisational legitimacy as opposed to macroeconomic development measures including creating

jobs or alleviating poverty. This indicates that sustainability remains to be viewed by the public relations scholarship in a more institutional rather than a national development framework. The least represented dimension is environmental sustainability, which supports the theoretical and empirical imbalance issues. According to studies by Olaniran and Williams (2017) and Salawu and Oyesomi (2016), environmental communication in Nigeria is frequently reactive and crisis-based, particularly in the extractive industry. Okunna and Omenugha (2018) also observe that environmental campaigns are mostly awareness creation campaigns with no quantifiable ecological results. This paucity of scholarship indicates that environmental PR is a bit under-theorised relative to social and economic sustainability aspects.

In methodological terms, the review also demonstrates that the majority of studies conducted in Nigeria are based on surveys and perception-based designs. Although these methods offer descriptive information, they are seldom used to assess the long-term effects of communication. Omojola (2021) and Oyesomi et al. (2020) thus suggest mixed-method designs that would integrate digital analytics and longitudinal designs to enhance causal explanation in the sustainability communication study.

All in all, the discussion affirms that the public relations scholarship in Nigeria is slowly moving towards a strategic development paradigm that can be backed by Agenda-Setting Theory, Development Communication Theory, and Stakeholder Theory. Nonetheless, the literature still lacks solid theoretical incorporations and empirical measurement models that can be used to connect communication processes and measurable sustainable development outcomes.

Conclusion

This systematic review indicates that the

concept of PR is becoming more and more recognised as a strategic tool to facilitate sustainable development in Nigeria. Available literature shows that PR has shifted its customary roles of publicity to stakeholder involvement, developmental communication and behavioural advocacy, in line with the sustainability framework of the United Nations. The literature indicates a high level of focus on social and economic sustainability, especially through awareness and corporate social responsibility programs, but environmental sustainability is understudied. Although there is an increase in scholarly interest, there are still gaps in theoretical synthesis and empirical quantification of development outcomes. Future studies ought to thus assume more rigorous and theoretically oriented research to enable the power of PR as a spur to attainable sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria.

References

- Adams, E. J., Ofordi, J. A., Ahmad, R., & Eneje, G. C. (2023). Public Relations and Promotion of Socio-Political Inclusiveness in Nigeria. *Ebonyi State University Journal of Mass Communication*, 10(1), 80-92.
- Adegbite, E., Amaeshi, K., Nakajima, C., & Amao, O. (2018). Corporate governance and responsibility in Africa: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147(2), 259–274.
- Adenuga, G. A., Lawal, A. A., & Sanusi, O. S. (2025). Corruption and governance in Nigeria: An assessment of the Buhari administration, 2015–2023. *African Journal of Stability and Development*, 17(2), 1070–1089.
- Adeola, O., & Adeola, D. (2019). *The extractive sector and corporate social responsibility: A case of Chevron Nigeria*. *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 45(3), 40–66.
- Ajala, O. S., & Igbokwe, N. (2019). *Public Relations and Participatory Governance in Nigeria*. *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 11(1), 144–157.
- Amaeshi, K. M., Adi, B. C., Ogbechie, C., & Amao, O. O. (2006). Corporate social responsibility in Nigeria: western mimicry or indigenous influences?. *Journal of Corporate citizenship*, (24), 83-99..
- Amaeshi, K., Adegbite, E., & Rajwani, T. (2016). Corporate social responsibility in challenging and non-enabling institutional contexts: do institutional voids matter?. *Journal of business ethics*, 134(1), 135-153.
- Amaeshi, K., Adegbite, E., & Rajwani, T. (2016). Corporate social responsibility in challenging and non-enabling institutional contexts: do institutional voids matter?. *Journal of business ethics*, 134(1), 135-153.
- Aribisala, T. M., Samson, A., & Chinenye, N. P. (2025). *Impact of Digital Public Relations on Good Governance, Accountability, and National Integration in Nigeria*. Path of Science. Retrieved from <https://pathofscience.org>
- Arikenbi, P. G., Ainakhuagbor, A., Ikharo, S., & Jimba, D. I. (2023). An assessment of the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in promoting environmental sustainability in Nigeria. *Journal of Advanced Research and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3(3), 78–95. <https://doi.org/10.52589/JARMS-5QO7ALTP>
- Asemah, E. S., Edegoh, L. O. N., & Ojih, E. U. (2018). Public relations and sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 8(3), 1–12.

- Ashby-King, D. T. (2025). *Communicating for good in a globalized world: Prosocial public relations practices and challenges*. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 19(3), 45–68. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0363811125001018>
- Capriotti, P., Zeler, I., & Camilleri, M. A. (2019). Corporate communication and the Sustainable Development Goals: Analysis of organizations' reporting. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(6), 1277–1288. (Scopus indexed)
- Chaka, M., & Adanlawo, E. F. (2022). Role of public relations (PR) in nation-building: A case study of South Africa. *Journal of Nation-Building and Policy Studies*, 6(3), 5.
- Damoah, I. S., Akwei, C. A., Amoako, I. O., & Botchie, D. (2018). Corruption as a source of government project failure in developing countries: Evidence from Ghana. *Project Management Journal*, 49(3), 17-33.
- Dike, H. W. (2025). Public relations strategies and reputation management: Mastering stakeholder engagement and community building. *International Journal of Latest Technology in Engineering, Management & Applied Science (IJLTEMAS)*, 14(3), 52-61.
- Edegoh, L. O. N., Asemah, E. S., & Nwammuo, A. N. (2019). Public relations strategies and sustainable development campaigns in Nigeria. *International Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 9(2), 1–12.
- Ejiofo, N. E., & Udu, T. F. (2023). assessing Public Relations Strategies as a Veritable Tool for Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility in South-South Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Education Humanities and Commerce*, 4(5), 42-54.
- Ejiofo, N. E., Ngong, C. A., Josiah Chukwuemeka, O., Chuka, I., Ugbam, C. O., & Ibe, G. I. (2023). Effect of public relations planning on human resource management performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1), 2222571.
- Ekanem, I. P., Umoh, U. J., & Oyokunyi, I. (2025). Innovations in stakeholder engagement and reputation management in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. *Journal of Strategic Public Relations and Communication (JSPRC)*, 1(1), 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.60951/afrischolar-436>
- Ekanem, I. P., Umoh, U. J., & Oyokunyi, I. (2025). Innovations in Stakeholder Engagement and Reputation Management in the Oil and Gas Industry in Nigeria: Journal Of Strategic Public Relations And Communication (JSPRC), Volume 1, Issue 1. *Afrischolar Discovery Repository (Annex)*, 191-204. <https://doi.org/10.60951/afrischolar-436>
- Ekharefo, D. O., & Obanor, A. I. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and reputation management: A study of selected oil firms in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, 6(3), 42–57.

- Ekwunife, R. A., Ukeje, I. O., Ogbulu, U., & Ojiaku, K. (2023). Sound Governance and Effective Public Relations: An Assessment of Nigerian Prison. In *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance* (pp. 12230-12236). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Elmond, T. A. (2025). Leveraging public relations for societal stability and development in Nigeria: A communication perspective. *African Journal of Stability and Development (AJSD)*, 17(2), 1451–1463. <https://doi.org/10.53982/ajsd.2025.1702.34-j>
- Elmond, T. A. (2025). *Leveraging Public Relations for Societal Stability and Development in Nigeria: A Communication Perspective*. *African Journal of Stability and Development (AJSD)*, 17(2), 1451–1463. <https://doi.org/10.53982/ajsd.2025.1702.34-j>
- Eyo, N. A. (2025). *Re-conceptualizing public relations practices in Nigeria: A framework to address systemic challenges*. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 4(1), 76–101. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105004120255>
- Garba, S., Shekobagu, A. G., & Muhammad, Y. (2024). Public Relations Strategies and Promotion of Agricultural Development and Food Security in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Jalingo Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 5(4), 232-242.
- George, K. J., Brown, G. N., & Ekpe, P. S. (2025). Communicating Sustainable Development in the Era of AI: An Evaluation of PR Strategies of Select PR Firms in Akwa Ibom State. *International Journal of Global Sustainable Research*, 3(9), 627-644.
- Griggs, D., Stafford-Smith, M., Gaffney, O., Rockström, J., Öhman, M. C., Shyamsundar, P., ... & Noble, I. (2013). Sustainable development goals for people and planet. *Nature*, 495(7441), 305-307.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Ibe, U. M., & Chinyere, I. F. (2023). Community Relations: A Catalyst for Development in Umuechem Oil Producing Community in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. *BW Academic Journal*, 9-9.
- Idemudia, U. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and development in Africa: Issues and possibilities. In A. Idemudia & K. Amaeshi (Eds.), *CSR and Development in Africa*. Routledge
- Ihua, U. B., Igwe, P. A., & Anyim, F. N. (2020). Public relations, corporate social responsibility, and community engagement: Lessons from Nigeria. *Public Relations Review*, 46(5), 101929. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101929>
- Ihunwo, I. K., Amadi, P. R., & Nsereka, P. B. (2020). Stakeholder perceptions of CSR campaigns as tools for enhancing public relations in Nigerian deposit banks. *BW Journal of Management*, 8(2), 119–135. <https://bwjournal.org/index.php/bsjournal/article/view/2479>

- Ijese, O. C., Kente, J. S., & Akase, T. M. (2025). Assessment of Public Relations Strategies for Sensitisation on the Prevention of COVID-19 by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). *International Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, 3(3), 711-727. <https://doi.org/10.58578/ijecs.v3i3.6556>
- Ikemefuna, M. J., Igyuve, A. I., & Ogande, A. (2025). Assessment of regulatory policy for public relations practice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*, 3(3), 748–765. <https://doi.org/10.58578/ijecs.v3i3.6958>
- Iyinoluwa, A. O., Ismail, O., & Emmanuel, I. (2023). A Literature Review of Public Relations Research in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review*, 6(3), 312-344.
- Lame, G. (2019, July). Systematic literature reviews: An introduction. In *Proceedings of the design society: international conference on engineering design* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1633-1642). Cambridge University Press.
- Le Blanc, D. (2015). Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets. *Sustainable Development*, 23(3), 176-187.
- Mmutle, T., Molale, T. B., Akinola, O. O., & Selebi, O. (Eds.). (2023). *Strategic Communication Management for Development and Social Change: Perspectives from the African Region*. Springer Nature.
- Nejo, O., Odiboh, O., Omokiti, F., & Adelua, M. (2020). Awareness and impact of the public relations activities on a state ministry of the environment in Nigeria. In *Education Excellence and Innovation Management: A 2025 Vision to Sustain Economic Development during Global Challenges*. Proceedings of the 35th International Business Information Management Association Conference.
- Nmere, O. N., Abugu, J. O., Alio, F. C., & Anetoh, J. C. (2020). Influence of public relations' media public enlightenment campaign and community participation strategies on waste management. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 18(1), 82.
- Nmere, O. N., Okolo, V. O., Abugu, J. O., Alio, F. C., & Anetoh, J. C. (2020). Influence of public relations' media public enlightenment campaign and community participation strategies on waste management. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 18(1), 82–96. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18\(1\).2020.08](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.18(1).2020.08)
- Nnabuko, J. O., & Onyiaji, J. (2021). Application of Public Relations in Enhancing Healthcare Delivery to Women of Reproductive Age in South-East Nigeria. *World Journal of Innovative Research*, 10(2), 9-15.
- Nwabueze, C. (2018). *Introduction to development communication*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers.

- Nwabueze, C. (2020). *Communication and sustainable development in Nigeria*. Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Nwammuo, A. N., & Ekwugha, U. P. (2019). Digital communication strategies and public relations practice in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(3), 389–404.
- Nwanmuoh, C., Dibua, A., Amaife, J., & Obi-Okonkwo, E. (2021). Public relations, social development, and national growth in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science and Advanced Research*, 3(4), 75–90.
- Nwanmuoh, E. E. (2020). Rethinking Public Relations and Community Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Development and Policy Studies*, 8(3), 77-82.
- Nwogbo, D. C., & Ighodalo, A. (2021). Governance and corruption in Nigeria. *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa*, 6(2), 81–97.
- Obasi, H. U., & Ubani, E. I. (2024). *The Use of Public Relations in Political Campaigns in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(7), 1134–1140. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.807093>
- Ogbonnaya, E. A. (2024). *Empirical studies in communication for development in Nigeria: The global view*. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 11(3), 226–239. <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2024.1103017>
- Okafor, R. O., Amadi, R. N., & Dike, H. W. (2025). Social Media and Stakeholders Engagements: A Study of Select Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, 3(3), 367-381.
- Okon, P. E. (2019). The Role of Research in Contemporary Public Relations Campaigns: A Case of Nigeria's Change-Begins-with-Me Rebranding Initiative. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 16(2), 128-143.
- Okorie, N. (2017). *Digital media and public relations practice in Nigeria*. Covenant Journal of Communication.
- Okpala, S. O., & Rabi, M. S. (2024). Assessment of public relations strategies for corporate image building in telecommunications companies in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *Lapai Journal of Humanities and Media*, 15(2), 75–92. <https://ojs.ibbujournals.com.ng/index.php/ljhm/article/view/1524>
- Olanrewaju, I. P., & Okorie, N. (2019). Corporate social responsibility communication and stakeholder perception in Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 6(2), 1–15.
- Oloruntola, S., & Omojola, O. (2018). Digital public relations and stakeholder engagement in Nigeria. *Public Relations Review*, 44(5), 785–793.

- Oloruntola, S., & Omojola, O. (2018). Digital public relations and stakeholder engagement in Nigeria. *Public Relations Review*, 44(5), 785–793.
- Oloruntola, S., & Omojola, O. (2020). Online stakeholder engagement and organisational legitimacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 20(3), e2040.
- Oluseye, O. (2024). Exploring potential political corruption in large-scale infrastructure projects in Nigeria. *Project Leadership and Society*, 5, 100108.
- Omojola, O. (2016). Public relations and governance communication in Nigeria. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 32(1), 89–103.
- Omojola, O. (2017). *Public relations and development communication in Nigeria*. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 9(1), 1–12.
- Omojola, O. (2019). *Public relations, governance communication and social sustainability in Nigeria*. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 105–119.
- Omojola, O. (2021). Public relations measurement and evaluation in emerging democracies. *Public Relations Review*, 47(4), 102063.
- Onifade, O. A. (2025). An evaluative study of public relations' promotion of national values in Nigeria. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 9(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17517622>
- Otuogha, A. M., & Eke, C., (2025). Strategic Public Relations in Wildlife Conservation Finance: Innovations, Challenges, And Sustainable Practices in The Niger Delta, Nigeria. In *Journal of Current Practice in Accounting and Finance (JCPAF)*, 16(9), 1–14 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17224847>
- Oyesomi, K., Oyero, O., & Okorie, N. (2018). Media framing and public participation in Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 5(1), 23–39.
- Oyesomi, K., Oyero, O., & Okorie, N. (2019). Social media and participatory governance in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11(2), 221–237. (
- Oyesomi, K., Oyero, O., & Okorie, N. (2020). Social media and stakeholder engagement: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 12(2), 203–218.
- Oyesomi, K., Oyero, O., & Okorie, N. (2020). Social media and stakeholder engagement in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 12(2), 203–218.
- Patrick, A. I. (2016). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) as strategy for environmental management awareness campaigns (EMAC): The telecommunication service providers as a case in reference. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 48.

- Salau, J., Oyesomi, K., & Oyedepo, T. (2020). Contextualising the Adoption of Modern Digital Media for Public Relation Practices. *International Journal of Management*, 11(7), 810–816.
- Salawu, A. (2018). *Communication structure and development outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa*. *African Communication Research*, 11(2), 211–230.
- Salawu, A., & Ojebuyi, B. (2020). Media framing of sustainable development goals in Nigeria. *African Journalism Studies*, 41(3), 86–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2020.1805463>
- Salawu, A., & Ojebuyi, B. R. (2016). Development communication and media advocacy in Africa. *African Communication Research*, 9(2), 235–254.
- Servaes, J., & Oyedemi, T. (2016). Social inequalities, media, and communication: Theory and roots. *Lexington Books*.
- Shenkoya, T. (2022). Can digital transformation improve transparency and accountability of public governance in Nigeria? *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 17(1), 54–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-08-2022-0115>
- Somorin, K. (2025). Challenges of Ethics and Practice of Political Public Relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In *Redefining Public Relations in Emerging Markets: Regional Insights from Africa, South America and Asia* (pp. 7-30). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Sule, D. S., & Ridwanullah, A. O. (2023). *The evolution of strategic communication: Practices and reflections in Nigeria*. *Public Relations Review*, 49(2), 102323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102323>
- Sule, S. Y. (2023). *The evolution of strategic communication in Nigeria: Growth, challenges and prospects*. *Public Relations and Communication Studies*, 12(1). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0363811123000383>
- Tanyishi, A. E. (2025). The Public Relations and Gender Equality in Nigeria: Assessing Representation and Its Impact on Social Change. *African Journal of Stability and Development (AJSD)*, 17(2), 1169-1180.
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2006). Public relations theory and practice in nation building. *Public relations theory II*, 341-359.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations.
- Were, I. O., Ojiambo, U., & Ndeti, W. (2025). Leveraging Multidimensional Communication Strategies to Enhance Research Visibility and Uptake in Advancing Sustainable

Development Goals in Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of KCA University. *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Research*, 2(2), 459-476.

Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., & Wiesenberg, M. (2018). Strategic communication and sustainable development: A multinational study. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 275–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1491883>