

## Professionalism in Service Marketing: The Role of Standards and Ethics: A Study of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations

OKO, A. E. NDU<sup>1</sup>, Nnolim D. A.<sup>2</sup> & Nwaizugbo, C. I.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Marketing, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Department of Marketing, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup> Department of Marketing, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Nigeria

Correspondence: OKO, A. E. NDU, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria. E-mail: a.e\_nduoko@yahoo.com

Received: February 18, 2014

Accepted: March 31, 2014

Online Published: May 22, 2014

doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n6p213

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v9n6p213>

### Abstract

The level and rate of growth in public relations practice in Nigeria though encouraging, the developmental strive is slow. The later accounts for the retarded growth rate of professionalism status attainment in the practice of public relations in Nigeria. This work therefore considered the role and relevance of standards in the practice of public relations, built on ethics and ethical values; as basic requirements for professionalism. It appraised the practice of public relations vis-à-vis other practices such as law and medicine and x-rayed the constraints to professionalism in public relations. The impact of public relations practitioners' characters/traits, work habits and membership enlistments requirements were assessed as factors that influence the quality of members' (service) output. Equally evaluated are the influences of non-universality and inconsistency characteristics of ethics and non-culpability of ethical breach on the practice of public relations. The work in addition, considered the role of confidentiality, integrity and objectivity in public relations practice and assessed the NIPR disciplinary management procedure given the institute's code of practice. Adequate analytical and statistical tools including Likert ranking scale and the ordinal and interval ranking scales, were employed in internal and external factor influence appraisals and solutions among others. In the midst of constraints were recommended as strive strategies to the attainment of professionalism in the practice of public relations in Nigeria. Inclusive of these are unified method of fees determination for practitioners, pre and post accreditation of membership, review of codes of practice for universality, improvement in the method and procedure of dispute management among others.

**Keywords:** professionalism, service marketing, standards, ethics, social environment, managerial distrust and moral corruption

### 1. Background

In most de-regulated economies, Nigeria inclusive; competition among different professions (inter and intra), for the attention and patronage of different publics is on the increase. This is spurred by the desire of these professions to consolidate their revenue base through qualitative services for consumers' satisfaction. Professions thus are striving towards professionalism; therefore, standards and ethics are required as guide to members' inter and intra relationships vis-à-vis the different publics and job expectations-Stiglitz (2003) and Velasquez (1996).

In the assertion of Koontz et al. (1998), the establishment of standards furnishes the yardstick against which actual or expected performance is measured. Thus where standards are drawn to reflect organizational structure and performance is measured based on these terms, the corrections of negative deviations are expected, and hence practitioners are aware exactly where in the assignment of individual or group duties, the corrective measures needed to be applied-Bucholz (2003) and Babin, James, Boles and Donald (2000).

Whereas performance measured at or above standards is considered an index of professionalism as characterized by superior performance; negative deviation in performance calls for caution and control-Horngren & Sundren (1990).

Professionals, members of public relations inclusive, may correct negative performance deviations by re-designing operational plans or goal re-modification; re-assignment or clarification of duties, improved staff quality or improved directing and leading roles of superiors. These duties in all are tasking and require a good dose of education and enlightenment-Akinbayo (2000) and Jansen and Gilnow (2000).

Education and enlightenment need to be general; however, emphases need to be laid on ethics and professional responsibilities, business ethics and the environment, ethics with the consumers as focus; employee rights and duties and quality of work live among others-Weber (2005).

The controversy that exists as to whether ethics should be a matter of personal choice (decision) or whether it is or should be universal, applying to every member of the professional body should be de-emphasized. In its place should be, that the goal (professionalism) strive of the institution (public relations) should be considered superior and greater than those of individual members-Wasden (2007).

Following the above submissions, it is proper to assert that harmonious relationship or combination of specifications in job performance (standard in performance) based on ethical regulations has the tendency of promoting professionalism- Peterson (2003).

Given the Nigeria situation, it will be deceptive to assert that the practice of public relations has ascended professional zenith (professionalism) based on the growth and development of the economy. However, chances of further growth and development do exist.

It is possible that the practice of public relations in Nigeria be marked with indelible qualities that will attract the supposed clients (publics) of the profession without resistance. This however is most possible, given qualitative performance of duty by members as are evaluated based on applicable standards.

Standards in turn must be applicable and must be guided by ethics to qualify to motivate professionalism. It is the opinion of this research that professionalism is an attainable height in the practice of public relations in Nigeria inspite of the negative impacts of culture, religion, social status, wealth etc on standards, if ethical practices are promoted as means of eliminating individual members' variances, for uniformity in performances-Shah (2011). This view agrees with Apostle Paul's logical presentation to the Romans in the Book of Romans Chapter 10 (ten) verses 14 (fourteen) and 17 (seventeen)

*"How then shall they call Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"*

There must be a good (perfect) relationship between 'believe', 'heard' and 'preacher' for salvation to be assured.

*"So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God"*

The faith required for success (including professionalism) and professional pursuit comes through hearing the word of God. These verses of the scripture show that every activity has sequence; thus ethics guide standards to professionalism.

It is the opinion of this research that professionalism is an attainable height in the practice of public relations in Nigeria inspite of the negative impacts of culture, religion, social status, wealth etc on standards, if ethical practices are promoted as means of eliminating individual members' variances, for uniformity in performances.

Absence in uniformity of standards renders standards invalid. However, the problem or crux of it is whether or not public relations is a full or quasi (semi) profession or not a profession at all, given the characteristics of profession.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problems*

The practice of public relations before the period of institutionalized learning of the course in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was fraught with mis-conception as most members lack (lacked) good exposure to standards and ethics of the practice. These members have continued to dominate the practice, thus professionalism has been in limbo-Okoro (2003).

The instruments of check of un-ethical conducts are weighed down by the number of reported and un-reported cases of ethical violations in the practice. The claims of quality membership with specialized knowledge and high standard of performance compared with societal expectations of the institution are yet to be substantiated-Wasden (2007).

Based on the above, uniformity of operations and performance procedures are not achievable especially as generally accepted standards of practice are not considered vital hallmarks of practice. The practice of public relations is currently faced with such problems as:

- Lack of clarity in understanding and appreciation of the duties of public relations.
- Lack of professional standards or poor appreciation of professional standards and absence of acceptable ethical codes, with attendant increase in the number of quacks in the practice.
- Non-acceptance of the practice (profession) as a managerial function, thus offices are not considered 'boardable' as a result, budgetary provisions for the practice of the profession are often grossly inadequate
- Intra membership conflicts resulting in and from distrust and lack of cooperation

- Conflicts between the provisions of the code of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR); professional ethics and the interest of individual members-Okoro (2003).

These problems which have their remote causes as absence of standards and ethics or the poor acceptance and inapplicability of same, have created lack of credibility in the practice, thus growth and professionalism are constrained.

The practice of public relations given applicable and acceptable standards and ethics will check the high incidence of un-registered practitioners, control and regulate information sourcing and dissemination and will reduce or eliminate the high incidence of inter membership litigations and those between public relations practitioners and members of the public.

### *1.2 Hypothesis of the Study and Research Questions*

The research work postulates hypotheses, projects research questions; x-rayed to assert the relationship or otherwise that exist between standards, ethics and professionalism and other variables considered vital for valid conclusions, thus:

This work is built on the null hypothesis stated thus:

H0: The internal inadequacies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria do not significantly impact on the drive to professionalism in the practice of Public Relation, and the under listed as research questions.

- Are public relations publics/clients influenced positively by variations in standards in terms of time and efficiency or by reduction in fees charged per periodic services output?
- Are public relations practitioners' periodic evaluations a function of operational efficiency or periodic revenue realization?
- Do the variations in public relations membership enlistment requirements especially along cultural and geo-social regions account for the non-uniformity in members' performance?
- What are the impacts of the non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability and non-culpability and non-importance of ethics on the acceptability of ethics as basis for the practice of public relations?
- Is there any significant relationship existing between ethics and consensually accepted standards of the practice (profession) of public relations?
- Do lack of confidentiality, competence, integrity and objectivity as ethical standards of public relations affect the fiduciary relationship that ought to exist between the practitioners and their clients?

The answers to these questions as contained in the questionnaire provide solution to the questions (orbits) of this research work.

### *1.3 Research Frame Work Design*

This study is survey based, and is aimed at asserting the impact of efficiency or otherwise of the management of the internal variables of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria (as dependent variable), on the strive for professionalism of the practice (as independent variable), data were sourced based on the use of sets of questionnaires as administered on practitioners as principals and employees, and clients respectively. The collected and collated data were structured based on the use of Likert's rank order scale and were analyzed using the Spearman's rank correlation co-efficient.

### *1.4 Significance of the Study*

The practice of public relations in Nigeria has high quacks dominance rate; thus, strive for professionalism has been constrained inspite of the existence of ethics and standards. Given the above, this study is considered important as it is aimed at providing sketch map to professionalism through the identification of militating factors. The work is considered vital as it serves as a guide to re-positioning the practice of public relations for better public acceptance given other practices and professions whose objectives among others include creating good corporate and product image for enhanced customer loyalty.

This study is also vital as it aids the assessment of clientele expectations of public relations and the roles and functions of public relations for parity establishment and for enhanced clientele satisfaction.

Given the increase in the wave of consumerism in Nigeria and consequent inter and intra professional litigations, this research work and its results will create and enhance public confidence in the practice of public relations through easier realization of clientele objectives, and promotion of industrial peace and harmony.

### *1.5 Methodology*

Operational efficiency of public relations practitioners in the private and public sectors is considered veritable platform of assessment. Thus, the impact of employers' influence on the roles and functions of public relations was assessed.

Questions were structured into questionnaire, oral questions inclusive, and were administered on public relations practitioners and other clients.

The questionnaire offered the respondents detailed explanations on the basis of the research findings and gave opportunities for the respondents to support or oppose the findings. The research exercise was executed based on the judgmental (non-probabilistic sampling method) sampling technique, in the area of selection of practicing firm and practitioner respondents as well as their clients.

The private and public sector practitioners had good proportional representation in the sample.

The respondents were selected from all the states of Nigeria including Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

Thus in determining the sample size for the exercise, the research used the Bowley's mathematical notation for calculating the sample for respondents, as represented on the mathematical notation 1:

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad \text{was adopted}$$

Where: n= sample size; I= constant; N = estimated population size; e= limit of tolerable error; estimated at 0.05.

The target setting, achievement and their appraisal; job description; job performance; training/courses requirements practitioners' performance and character/traits; work habit; ability to attract clients; etc were evaluated based on the principles of the ordinal scale ranking; and the interval scale order respectively- Ezejelue, Ogwo and Nkamnebe (2007). Following these, both scales, the measure of central tendency and statistical measures of variation were applied as required.

The decision rule stated below was applicable for data analysis and interpretation:

**Accept projected statement:** if and only if the value calculated is greater than the accepted mean of 50 (fifty) percent

**Reject projected statement:** if otherwise

The hypothesis is analyzed based on the spearman's rank correlation co-efficient represented by the mathematical notation 1.

$$r = \frac{1 - 6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)} \quad (1)$$

As the ideal (standard) rating of the practice's performance is compared with actual performance based on core issues of employers'-clients' relationships, practitioners' characteristics and work habits; membership enlistment requirements-performance; impact of non-university, inconsistency, non-culpability etc of ethics; relationship or otherwise between ethics in the practice of Public Relations and consensually accepted standard; lack of confidentiality, competence, integrity and objectivity on Public Relations' strive to professionalism and the importance of discipline and its management as bases of professionalism in the Public Relations practice.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Introduction

Public relations practice in its striving for professionalism, like other service oriented activities is subject to internal and external influences with the human elements as its orbit. Thus members of the public relations practice at all levels and strata must respond to, re-act to, and live within the environmental influences for target achievement.

Principal elements of these environments are economic, technology, social, politics, law and ethics, most of which are dynamic. It is therefore important that the public relations practitioner(s) should be alert and perceptive to these environmental influences for planning generally, and standard setting particularly as the later aids uniformity in operations, if well harnessed-Szekely and Knirsch (2005) and Takala (2010).

Standards in operations are achieved as practitioners accept uniform specific premises which must be consistent with the ideals of the practice. However, the vagaries in culture, social values and economic status of practitioners of public relations in Nigeria, like other practices (professions) make the acceptance of specific premises for the articulation of standards difficult. Thus standards differ among public relations practitioners, based on the perceived degree of control or social, educational, economic attainments etc within basic environmental influences-United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2004).

These factors notwithstanding, it is important to state that professionalism in the practice of public relations in Nigeria is achievable, sustainable and enhance-able given uniformity in operational standards; and standards can only be achieved and sustained as practices in public relations are executed based on consensus acceptable ethical values and standards-Kecmanovic (2005).

## 2.2 Concept of Standard

Standard is an accepted state of normally; this account for the literal definition of DISEASE as a deviation from normality-Wehmeier, McIntosh, Turnbull & Ashby (2005). Thus concepts and expressions such as abnormal behaviour, poor academics, poor or bad performance and un-ethical practice do exist in every day social, business and professional interactions.

Standards are sketch maps to goal attainment, and they serve as measure of comparison of performances, actual performances are compared with STANDARDS for variance analysis, and or error measurement and correction-Horngren and Sunden (1990).

It is important that the public relations practice, in its bid to professionalism should adopt standards, for performance appraisal in all its sub-operational fields so that the un-ethical practices and practitioners may easily be noticed and called to order-Lyman (1971), Marignan and Ferrel (2004) and McPhail (2001).

Practitioners, public relations inclusive are often confronted with questions such as:

- What standard of performance should be expected and accepted as general among members?
- Should the standard be severe, that it is rarely, if ever attainable?
- Should standard be attainable with certain and specific level of educational attainment in addition to or excluding profession qualifications?

The answers to these questions vary across practices and professions. However; within definite practices and professions, uniformity of standards is advocated for, in spite of obvious individual member's socio-economic and political status variances.

## 2.3 Importance of Standards in Practice of Public Relations Profession

All corporate standards as well as departmental objectives are considered vital aid to the achievement of organizational goals; especially as the unified departmental or sub goals (objectives/standards) foster corporate unity of purpose-Moir (2001).

Standards as focus of actions and or activities are considered important in practices including public relations for some obvious reasons; some of which include:

- **To Adjust to Uncertainties**

Given the fact that public relations is anchored on human behaviour as influenced by psychology, expectations and decisions of the numerous publics which are mostly uncertain and in most cases too, the operational inputs as well as the environments are most uncertain, it is therefore; expected of public relations practitioners to set standards in advance of performance with a view to adjusting adequately with the internal and external environmental uncertainties of the practices of public relations.

It is important to note that even where the environmental factors are certain, standards are still considered vital tools of control, influencing decisions on selection of factor inputs, application and co-ordination of basic inputs and techniques of operations-Mullin (2004) and McPhail (2001).

The growth in technology has enormous impacts on professional practices, thus standards of practice are required as guide especially among public relations practitioners, on the need to remain or make changes in target markets, as the technology of the diverse markets (public satisfaction) are not uniform. This has its cost implications on public relations operational efficiency as is determined when actual costs are compared with standards.

- **Better Articulations of Objectives**

Standards as formulated; give focus to the actualization of objectives. Practitioners of public relations with standards as major influences on performances are compelled to sub-due or sub-jugate personal objectives, for professional objectives, thus all non acceptable standards given the inter-departmental and organizational relations are relegated to the back ground-Baucus & Baucus (2004) and Beckun & Badawi (2005).

- **Economy of Scales (Advances)**

Standards determine performances; thus reduce and or eliminate irrelevant costs; efficiency is promoted and consistency in operation is achieved. This is because different sub-ordinate operations are better planned and co-ordinated-Cooper & Frank (2002).

- **Achievement of Control**

Performance cannot be measured and assessed without goals and programmes as standards; as they are considered the benchmarks for appraisals-Horngren & Sundren (1990).

In the assertion of Knootz, O'Donnell & Weilrich (1981), there is no way to control without (plans to use as) standards. Practitioners of public relations must have standard of performances for the judgement of practice on quack, un-ethical, illegal etc, as these standards will determine the degree of deviation from normalcy- Ferrell, Hall & White (2001) and Ganesh, Amold & Reymolds (2000).

#### 2.4 Causes of Negative Deviation from Standards

Public relations like other practices occasionally compare actual performances of practitioners or the profession in general with standards, for possible determination of causes of favourable and or unfavourable variances from standards-Kotler & Keller (2009) and Lacznlak, Berkowitz, Brokes & Hale (1995).

These comparisons may be in the areas of time usage, personnel, technology, goal attainment, conduct of practice, personal traits of practitioners etc. These areas of comparisons are cost involving; (implicit and explicit) thus, affect profit positively or negatively and normally, where performance conforms to expectations-kotler & Keller (2009) and Kotler & Armstrong (2010).

Deviations from standards-(unfavourable) are attributed to:

- **Uncertainty in Operational Environments**

Uncertainty in operational (internal and external) environments as are associated with insurable and un-insurable risks could and do cause deviations in operational standards-Bateman & Snell (1999).

Uncertainties are often traced to inter and intra practice competitions, public relations vis-à-vis other organizations' promotional activities, vagaries in monetary and fiscal policies and other factor influences-De George (1990).

Koontz, O'Donnell & Weilhrich (1981) are of the opinion that managerial errors caused by unforeseeable events cannot be avoided. The uncertainty management is complex as probability cannot often be estimated for their occurrences, thus they wreck managerial plans even in Public Relations practice.

- **Lack of Knowledge, Experience or Judgment**

Public Relations practitioners are of the consensus opinion that inadequacies in practitioners' background as well as secondary knowledge and experience may lead to deviation of performance from standards-Badarocco & Webb (1995). Thus the Public Relations umbrella organization in Nigeria is expected to design and implement serial body of learning before-during-and after enrollment of members into the practice (profession) as a means of keeping members abreast of relevant knowledge for desired profession growth.

#### 2.5 Ethics in Public Relations-An Introduction

Ethics regulate standards and standards shot practices into professions, thus enhance professionalism.

Ethics as well as laws are vital instruments for control of performances and behaviours. Though laws have comprehensive acceptance, and breach there-to attract legal sanction rather than moral; ethics are build on moral and good judgement in relationships between the Public Relations practitioners, the clients, the professional body and the larger society-Krohe (1997) and Ferrell & Fraedrich (1997).

Ethics, thus have more acceptability as instrument of control rather than law in strive for professionalism in Public Relations practice, thus form the core of the current discourse-Kohlberg & Candee (1984).

#### 2.6 Basic Issues in Ethics

Ethics revolve around standards of acceptance or un-acceptable and right or wrong conducts in individuals, social groups or principles that influence activities.

In assertion of UMUC (1995), ethics are concerned especially with the ultimate rules or notions of what constitute 'acceptable or unacceptable' behaviour for our society.

This "acceptable or unacceptable" behaviour could be individual, social or business (profession) and are concerned with human duties, and obligations-Guy (1990). Thus Public Relations in its strive for professionalism, has duties and obligations to its base of practice (the organization), the shareholders, employees, clients (customers), the press and media, community of host and the society at large. These duties and obligations, which span beyond legal, are ethical.

#### 2.7 Importance of Ethics in Public Relations: Practice

Ethics are vital in the practice of public relations, as they assist practitioners take decisions when faced with important conflict resolving situations. These conflicts exist in the relationship between the practice and practitioners and numerous publics of target, depending however on the degree of divergence of interests-Bateman & Snell (1999).

Ethical values ensure that individual practitioner's interests/desires vis-à-vis, the practice and the publics are not satisfied in the interests of the public alone. This understanding enhances the acceptance of the practice as well as the striving for professionalism -Farnham (1993).

Ethics regulate the pricing of public relations services, quality, personnel input, channel choices etc, and ensure that the satisfaction of the desires of the target publics serve as focus and guide. Information about the public

relations offer must be the truth, accurate and accessible for informed decisions by the publics. This, authorities argue, will reduce the incidence of law suits and possible bankruptcy associated with lost business.

Following these assertions, it is right therefore to conclude that:

*Ethics are common guides that attempt to find, promote and justify a set of principles, rules and considerations for deciding what to do when faced with conflicts.*

It is important therefore for public relations as a practice to streamline its ethical rules and principles for individual and corporate conflicts resolution given the facts that conflicts are regular social or business occurrences and that ability to manage conflicts successfully is a mark of (maturity) –professionalism in practices- Paine (1994), Hall & Hall (1994) and Farnham (1995).

### *2.8 Critical Issues in Ethics of Public Relations*

In the assertion of Fulmer (1978), ethical codes and ethical behaviour can benefit all constituents of the society, the enterprise itself, employees, customers and the industry, public relations inclusive:

- Public relations practice derives the benefit of being able to appraise its internal and external relationships, thus is able to gain insight into desirable and acceptable standards of practice. It is also able to market itself given the satisfaction of the diverse interests of the numerous publics of public relations practice; following effective self regulation, which often serves as barrier to governmental and other external controls-archieve.treasurying.gov.au/documents/1131/HTML/docshell.asp?delandhbswk.hbs.edu/item/5590.html April 9,2007.
- Employees of public relations based on the provision of ethical code are assured of job security; enhanced employer/employee relationships and normally ‘sound’ employees are saved the trouble of engaging in unethical services as a means of satisfying management or employers.
- Public relations clients are equally assured of fair and honest conduct in businesses, based on the provisions of the ethical codes and confidentiality as expected in public relations-Lantos (2002)
- For the industry; public relations firms given accepted ethical standards can trust each other for fair competition, devoid of destructive advertising, price cut and other business unethical acts. Ethical standards are generally considered the flagship of professionalism-Maignan & Ferrell (2004).

Public relations practitioners, inspite of these numerous benefits derivable from ethically executed practices are constrained by difficulties associated with attaining high level of ethical standards. Fulmer (1978) attributes these constraints to:

- Inadequate public disclosure and publicity of preferred ethics and ethical codes;
- The increased concern of and for a better informed public on what should be ethical.

Brenner & Molander (1978) add that these constraints are further compounded by increased governmental regulations and by educational services that are aimed at increasing professionalism.

These factors constitute hindrances to consensus acceptance among practitioners of what should be accepted as ethical standards.

Other constraints are inadequate and ineffective enforcement of ethical standards, as public relations practitioners are not often held liable/responsible for breach of conducts of practice. Unethical conducts of practitioners should give rise to sanctions such as withdrawal of benefits and privileges-Nelson (1987) and Preston & Post (1975).

Public relations practitioners are of the opinion that the enforcement of ethical codes are not quite easy, however they argue that the existence of such codes can enhance ethical conformity in behaviour with expectations. Brenner & Molander (1997) argue that ethical codes no matter how detailed there are, may not solve all problems. However, to enforce these codes effectively, the support of top public relations managers will be required as their behaviour in practice must show reasonable conformity and consistency with expected ethical standards-Goodpaster (1991) and Vitell & Davis (1990).

Based on this discourse, it is the assertion of this research that ethics as are employed in Nigeria and particularly in public relations practice may not achieve results given the high level of immorality in the society especially as the leadership of the nation lacks the moral courage to reverse the ugly trend.

### *2.9 Need for Ethics in Professionalism*

The profession and practitioners of public relations is expected to show high degree of interest and standards of performance, as these are basic pre-requisites for gaining exclusive governmental re-cognition. Standards and ethics where properly adhered to, give uniformity to fees determination and promote ethical trustworthiness-Hagarty & Sims (2004).

Collectively defined standards especially in area of qualifications to practice public relations aid legal

recognition of the institute. The contrary in the assertion of UMUC (1995).

Would it be difficult to persuade a legislative that the effort to draw closure around a certified body of practitioner is founded on anything other than a self servicing grab for power.

This accounts for increase in emphasis among professionals for disciplinary knowledge and rigorous educational qualifications for membership.

Professions, (practices) public relations inclusive; acquire the force of law and their ethics and standards are adopted by regular courts of law where the ethics and standards are adopted by members with sufficient consensus and solidarity- Hagarty & Sims (2004).

Hence the law in extreme cases testifies and justifies actions, omissions and commissions of practitioners vis-à-vis the publics and vice-verse standards and ethics, which form bases for professionalism-Bazerman & Banaji (2004) and Wasden (2007).

Professionalism imposes social responsibilities on the professions and professionals. Thus the desire to create satisfaction is re-ordered thus:

- The large society;
- The client;
- The profession and;
- The practitioner (professional).

Based on the foregoing, professionalism in professions is measured based on the degree and level of social responsibility of the professions and professionals-Ferrell & Fraedrick (1997), Quinn & Jones (1995) Kok & Weile, Mckenna & Brown (2001) and Bateman & Snell (1999). Therefore, the public relations practitioners must be influenced by the reasonable opinion of their different and numerous publics in decision making.

Given these discourses, it may be important to question thus:

- What should be expected of public relations professionals when their opinions, attitudes and interests are at variance with those of the establishment being represented?
- Whether there is limit to the obligations and responsibilities of public relations (practitioners) in employment or private practice, especially given the environmental dynamisms that influence ethics and standards?

This discourse provides answers to these questions thus:

- In accepting a salaried position, any public relations professional (practitioner) is committed to the aims of the organization as employer, thus has ethical and professional obligations to contribute to achieving these aims.
- The performances and obligations of public relations professional (practitioner) in a profession that is aiming at professionalism can only be limited by the expert knowledge and detailed information available within the changing environments, thus higher obligations call for advanced education and training.

In all, the public relations ethical obligations on trust expect the expert to avoid taking advantage of the non-expert or client.

### *2.10 Nigeria Institute of Public Relations and Professionalism*

“Public relations” in Nigeria has been contending with internal and external environmental forces in a bid to professionalism. In the view of Oko (2002), the important aspects of the environmental forces, the public relations practitioner must aim at influencing and or aligning with and must be accommodated by all except those whose natural conscience are dead or seared.

This discourse will want to know how many Nigerians including practitioners of public relations whose natural consciences are living. The deadness of consciences accounts for the high level of unethical practices among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. Thus public relations activities are not as executed, based on public and self analyses; good programme and policy formulation and interpretation, communication and persuasion and continued analysis and re-adjustment of policies. As a result, ‘guackism’ and incompetence are on the increase while professionalism is relegated to the background.

The poor rate of professionalism of public relations in Nigeria is attributed to the following:

#### *2.10.1 High Rate or Moral Corruption*

In the assertion of Ajai (2001), the cancer of moral corruption eats its way slowly into the vital sectors of the Nigeria society; thus Nigeria is in a lost condition. The level of discrete and social responsibility in the conduct



of civic and public relations duties is poor, thus the economy may not be restored to buoyancy.

Based on this low level of moral sanctity, public relations practitioners as micro members of the large society are grossly influenced negatively, to the level of total or partial dis-regard for ethics and standards. The demand for flawless morality for practitioners in terms of good relationships with members and environments, honesty, sincerity, trustfulness, just and kindness as well as unselfishness in relations and dealings with the publics is viewed as un-attainable standard.

### 2.10.2 Managerial Distrust

Public relations in its bid to professionalism through the accomplishment of its duty as a bridge-builder between the employer and the public is faced with the problem of credibility. Managers and employers as well as the general publics find it difficult to build confidence in public relations, its ethics, standards and professionalism.

To correct this situation, practitioners are expected to master their job and be familiar with all aspects of the employers' organization, the internal and external environments. This, it is argued, will inspire confidence and respect for the practice by corporate management and the publics.

### 2.10.3 Lack of Ingenuity among Practitioners

The public relations environments though dynamic and complex, do not offer challenges, thus ingenuity among practitioners is poor.

Practitioners of public relations are expected to stimulate vertical and horizontal flow of knowledge internally and externally, in the organization of employment. In the opinion of Ajai (2001), a public relations practitioner must think long and deeply too; and must carefully discriminate between the professional practice policies with:

- Social and societal forces;
- Legal environment;
- Economic influences;
- Competitors and competitive activities; and
- Technology environment.

The vulnerability of the human nature and the vagaries as well as the dynamism of the macro policies have made the efficient management of public relations environments difficult, thus attainment of professionalism status in the practice seems elusive.

However, common standards for the approval of practitioners' performance are desired, as means of ascribing value to clientele. These standards determine quality of membership, discipline, rewards and de-listing of membership conditions.

Public relations in Nigeria has also developed a body of ethics for members-NIPR (1992). Members frown at the violation of these ethics whose highlights include the following:

- Members of the profession owe it a duty to respect the moral principles of the universal declaration of human rights and the freedom entrenched in the constitution of the country of their practice;
- Members must recognize that each member (person) has the right to his own judgement;
- Members shall respect the right of parties in a dispute to express their respective points of view;
- Members shall encourage the free circulation of public information and preserve the integrity of channels of communication;
- Members shall put truth and honesty of purpose before all other considerations.
- Members shall safeguard the confidence of their present and previous employers or clients ;
- Members shall refuse to enter into any agreements which require the attainment of certain result before the payment of professional fees;
- Members shall protect the professional reputation of the practice of another member, but make it their duty to report unethical behaviours on the part of any member(s) of the profession;
- Members shall not seek to displace (any) other members with their employers or clients, except with the mutual agreement of all parties concerned;
- Members shall not cooperate with any front organizations;
- Members shall cooperate with other members in upholding and enforcing the code of conduct.

These ethics in the assertion of Oko (2002) are more of self consciousness of:

*The rights and privileges of others in the practice of public relations, what is good and what is less good,*

*between the true and the false, the useful and the useless and must be able to communicate clearly and honestly.*

In the Nigeria environment where deceit, cheating and double standard are accepted in practice as standard and preached against in theory does not aid the building of positive ingenuity. Thus professionalism in public relations is not advanced.

#### 2.10.4 Inadequate Formal and Non-Formal Education

Public relations are taught as a first-degree course in not more than one university and one polytechnic in Nigeria; and as a Master Degree Programme in one University. Most post graduates of public relations are mix-cropped' as their backgrounds differ reasonably from public relations. These two factors combined, hinder the practice efficiency of public relations practitioners. In another development, Ajai (2001) laments against the dwindling relevance of our educational institutions. Nigerians are fast losing hope in indigenous institutions of learning as variable sources of intellectual advancement. High level of indiscipline and moral decadence are the order of the day in institution of learning. How then can an ill-equipped people academically and morally be expected to fit into public relations profession?

However, it is the view of this research work that graduates of public relations should be exposed to period of internship to understudy professionals and sharpen their skill and develop power of ingenuity as pre-qualification for licensing. This will reasonably add value to the practice and professionalism of public relations.

#### 2.10.5 Hostile Business/Social Environments

Government as a major monitor of business and social environments creates hostility towards the practice of public relations.

Government at different levels of operation do not seem to respect and recognize their publics, thus policies create dis-harmony among the different publics. Public relations, thus is seen as agent of governments either as employees or private practitioners in their role. This situation exposes the practice to hostility. Unfortunately too, inputs of public relations through the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations, to governance have always failed to receive acknowledgement, thus are not acted upon.

#### 2.10.6 Undeveloped Economy

Though the economy is experiencing growth, the rate of development is rather slow. The rate of capital formation given low wages and high cost of living is equally low. These, cumulatively affect the level of investment in public relations practice and are challenges to entrepreneurship. Public relations as practiced in Nigeria is entrepreneurship based, hence appropriate investments for growth and professionalism are deficient. Required technological based has not been met, media associations and ownerships are lopsided in favour of government, thus credibility of information as core variables for public relations activities is questionable.

Given the above, it will be difficult or impossible for public relations in Nigeria to fit into the description of the role of the practice as projected by Jefkins (1985) thus:

It is powerful communication tool, but that is if it works successfully. It must be credible. Unless our messages are believed, they will fail to achieve their primary objective which-UNDERSTANDS.

The infrastructural deficiencies and communication inadequacies prevalent, as precipitated by the state of Nigeria under-development make the attainment of public relations, as a powerful communication tool unsuccessful. Consequently on this, professionalism through the creation of understanding has remained elusive.

#### 2.10.7 Clumsy and Conflicting Provisions of Code Practice

Conflict is common in every human relationship; ability to harmonize relationships even in the face of conflicts promotes professionalism in practices.

Public relations practitioners' private interests are often at conflict with provisions of ethical code of practice and these often result to unethical behaviours by practitioners. The process of resolving these conflicts sequel to the provisions of the code is also clumsy.

Section 13 (thirteen) and 19 (Nineteen) respectively of NIPR code 1992 of practice provide for professional discipline and offences. However, details of what constitute offences and expected punishments on conviction are not well explained.

The supplementary provisions relating to the disciplinary tribunal and investigating panel make the management of disputes un-encouraging.

These areas of the Act (Decree) Number 16-Nigeria Institute of Public Relations Probationers Act 1990 are recommended for review for speedily dispensation of justice and for professionalism.

### 2.11 Conclusion

Though the use ethics as mould for fashioning acceptable behaviours in practices seems too ambiguous and creates dis-illusion among practitioners especially as simple border lines cannot easily be created, between ethical and un-ethical practices; ethics are vital as they make it easier to appraise actions and decisions for best ethical standards.

Ethics in practice aid the evaluation of performance and the comparison of same with standards. It is equally an accepted opinion that ethics are the bane of every standard and the neglect of ethics renders standards invalid.

Standards as attained in practice create professional goodwill as different publics are satisfied and goodwill is the core of public relations.

Standards form basis for reward and punishment respectively in different practices, consistency in standards of practice among members given predetermined criteria for membership promotion professionalism.

Public relations therefore should insist on compliance with ethical standards, for standard performance and for acceptable guide to professionalism. The relationship between standards, ethics and professionalism in the practice of public relations is vital if the supposed clients of public relations must be attracted without resistance in the growing but not developing economy of Nigeria.

Qualitative performances are only possible where activities of practitioners are based on standards and standards without ETHICS are most elusive. Apostle Paul told the Roman Church in the book of romans chapter ten verses fourteen and seventeen:

*“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom thy have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? “*

Based on the above scripture, salvation can only be assured when an acceptable relationship exist between believe, hearing (heard) and preaching.

So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

This simply means that faith is a function of hearing the word of God. Thus faith, hearing and the word of God are vital for obtaining expectations solutions.

It is therefore obvious that professionalism in public relations must be guided by principles and procedures, called ethics; these ethics evaluate standards of performance. The satisfaction of public relations publics consistently over a long period of time based on ethics and standards is an assurance of professionalism. Thus, It is rational to conclude that all things have (order) sequence; ethics guide standards to professionalism.

This sequence can only yield desired result given proper elimination of the weaknesses associated with the quest for professionalism in public relations in Nigeria, in the face of well-defined quantitative standards and attainable ethical behaviour acceptable within the industry and the larger society.

### 3. Data Analysis

Data collected for this research work were analyzed as below:

#### 3.1 Analysis 1

Determination of whether or not public relations publics/clients are influenced positively by variations in standard in terms of time and efficiency compared to reduction in fees charged per periodic service output.

Analysis of above is based on target setting, job description and job performance and the assessment of employers/clients.

This is shown in table 1 thus:

**Decision Rule:** If value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (accepted mean), accept the projection the PR publics/clients are influenced by standard in terms of time and efficiency.

If otherwise, reject.

Table 1. Job assessment by employers/clients

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1) How well do The PR practitioners apply Acquired professional skill	12	2	11	11	14
2) How well do the PR practitioners understand, organize and execute the job assigned	8	1	12	11	18
3) How much does the PR practitioner Accomplish within time lag	10	2	11	10	17
4) Do the PR practitioners convince the public	8	3	12	12	15
5) What level of accuracy do the PR practitioners' achieve	6	2	12	11	19
6) Assess the PR practitioners' relationship with the publics	9	1	12	10	18
7) What is the PR practitioners' rate/level or Power of initiative	7	2	12	10	19
Score	68	15	93	85	139
Multiplier Weighted score	5	4	3	2	1
Aggregate weighted score	340	60	279	270	139
Based on table 1 values	998				
Standard weight = 2000					
Actual weight =988					
∴ Aggregate weight as a percentage of Actual weight					
$= \frac{988 \times 100}{2000 \times 1}$					
=49.40 percent					

**Decision:** Since value calculated, 49.40\* percent is less than accepted mean of 50 percent, the projection that the PR publics/clients are influenced by standard in terms of time and efficiency is rejected.

Accepted is that the PR publics/clients are positively influenced by reduction in fees charged per periodic output.

**Note:** for the purpose of eliminating rounding off error, 49.40 percent is not the same nor equal to 50 percent.

**Interpretation:** The analysis shows that the employers/clients of PR practice appraise the practice based on quality of services; however oral interview of respondents show that clients and employers are greatly influenced by reduction in fees and charges.

### 3.2 Analysis 2

Determine whether or not public relations practitioners' periodic evaluations are functions of specific level of operational efficiency or periodic revenue realization.

Analysis above is based on PR practitioners' characteristics and work habits as assessed by practitioners, employers and interested members of the publics as presented in table 2.

#### Decision Rule:

If value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (accepted mean), accept the projection that PR practitioners' evaluations are functions of specific level of operational efficiency.

If otherwise, reject.

Table 2. PR practitioners' characters/traits and work habits assessment

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1) How dependable are the PR practitioners	64	2	=	=	=
2) How loyal are the PR practitioners	61	4	1	=	=
3) How honest are the PR practitioners	64	1	1	=	=
4) How reliable are the PR practitioners	64	1	1	=	=
5) What is the PR practitioners' level of responsibility	65	1	=	=	=
6) Do the PR practitioners market self-appropriate in appearance and carriage	62	2	2	=	=
7) Assess the PR practitioners' level of drive and determination	63	3	=	=	=
8) Assess the PR practitioners' efficiency in	61	4	=	=	=
Score	609	24	8	∅	∅
Multiplier	5	4	3	2	1
Weighted score	3045	98	24	∅	∅

---

Aggregate weighted score	3167
Based on table 2 values	
Standard weight = 3205	
Actual weight =3167	
∴ Aggregate weight as a percentage of Actual weight	
$= \frac{3167 \times 100}{3205 \times 1}$	
=98.81 percent	

---

**Decision:** Since value calculated, 98.81 percent is greater than accepted mean of 50 percent; the projection that PR practitioners' periodic operational evaluations are function of specific level of operational efficiency is accepted.

Rejected is that PR practitioners' periodic evaluations are functions of operation period revenue realization.

**Interpretation:** Employers/clients, interested members of the publics and PR practitioners' value efficiency in services higher than accurable revenue due from the services, in assessing (rating) PR practices for (choice) selection.

### 3.3 Analysis 3

Determine whether or not the variation in membership enlistment requirements especially along cultural and geo-social regions is responsible for the non uniformity in members' performance measurement.

The analysis is based on selected questions on work environment, and professionalism.

**Decision Rule:** If value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (accepted mean), accept the opinion that the variations in membership enlistment requirements is responsible for non-uniformity in members' performance measurement.

If otherwise, reject

The analysis as per data is shown in table 3.

Table 3. Assessment of membership enlistment requirements/performance measurement

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1) How adequate were the basic requirements for the execution of PR functions	10	10	1	=	85
2) Assess the adequacy of enlistment requirements	10	20	6	20	50
3) Assess the adequacy of governmental control of PRPractice	23	31	2	50	
4) To exercise some intellectual power for PR practice	28	12	2	6	40
5) To be licensed for practice	10	4	30	2	50
6) Need to be socially responsible by practitioners	20	10	10	6	50
7) Assess the impact of social influences	14	2	24	50	
8) Assess the impact of high rate of moral corruption	20	2	24	60	
Score	<u>78</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>163</u>	465
Multiplier	5	4	3	2	1
Weighted score	390	452	393	323	465
Aggregate weighted score	2026				
Based on table 3 values					
Standard weight = 4750					
Actual weight =2026					
Actual (aggregate weight) as a percentage of standard weight					
$= \frac{2026 \times 100}{4750 \times 1}$					
=42.65 percent					

---

**Decision:** Since value calculated, 42.65 percent is less than accepted mean of 50 percent; the assertion that the variation in membership enlistment requirements especially along cultural and geo-social regions is not responsible for the non-uniformity in members' performance measurement is rejected.

Accepted is that variations in enlistment requirements for the practice of PR is responsible for non-uniformity in

performance measurement.

**Interpretation:** The variation in requirements for enlistment into the practice of PR across the nation especially as influenced by social and cultural factors is a significant variable in the non-uniformity in PR performance appraisal and measurement; among PR practitioners in Nigeria

### 3.4 Analysis 4

Assess the impact of the non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability and non importance of ethics on the acceptability of ethics as basis for the practice of public relations.

The analysis is based on selected questions on work environment and professionalism as contained in the questionnaire.

**Decision Rule:** Accept the assertion that the non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability and non-importance of ethics have negative impacts on the acceptance of ethics as basis for the assessment of the practice of public relations if value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (accepted mean).

If otherwise, reject the assertion.

The analysis of data is shown in table 4.

Table 4. Impact of non-universality, Inconsistency, non-culpability etc of ethics

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1. Degree of freedom PR practitioners enjoy in Course of job execution	10	24	72	=	=
2. Decline in standards in the practice	60	24	22	=	=
3. Poor conditions of service and fees	62	23	21	=	=
4. Decline in moral and ethical values	106	∅	∅	=	=
5. Prevalence of armatures and quacks inthe practice	104	2	∅	=	=
6. Hash economic environment in Nigeria	101	5	∅	=	=
7. Assessment of the role of confidentially, competence and integrity on the practice of PR in Nigeria	103	3	∅	=	=
Score	545	81	115	∅	∅
Multiplier	5	4	3	2	1
Weighted score	2930	324	345	∅	∅
Aggregate weighted score	3399				

Based on table 4 values,

Standard weight                    3710

Actual (aggregate weight)        3399

Actual (aggregate weight) as a percentage of standard weight

$$= \frac{3399 \times 100}{3710 \times 1}$$

=91.61 percent

**Decision:** Value calculated 91.61 percent is greater than accepted mean of 50 (fifty) percent, thus the opinion that the non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability and non –importance of ethics as standard have negative impacts on ethics as basis of PR practice assessment is accepted

Rejected is the contrary opinion.

**Interpretation:** The analysis shows that the non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability and non-importance of ethics among practitioners have always been shown as difficulty in the acceptance of ethics as standard for the practice of public relations.

### 3.5 Analysis 5

Assessment of the relationship that exists between ethics and consensually accepted standard of the practice (profession) of public relations.

The analysis is based in selected questions on professionals with bias for variables that affect the practice

positively or negatively as contained in the questionnaire.

**Decision Rule:** Accept that significant relationship exists between ethics and consensually accepted standards of the practice of PR if value calculated is greater than the accepted mean of 50 (fifty) percent;

Reject, if otherwise.

The analysis of data is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Assessment of relationship or otherwise existing between ethics in PR practice and consensually accepted standards

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
Assessment of impact of the underlisted Variables on the practice of PR					
1. Competitors' and competitive activities	12	20	25	5	45
2. Technological environment	12	18	20	5	46
3. Managerial distrust for PR	13	22	25	4	45
4. Hostile business/social environments	11	18	24	5	40
5. Under –developed economy	10	22	26	5	51
Score	58	100	120	24	227
Multiplier	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Weighted score	290	400	360	48	227
Aggregate weighted score	1325				
Based on table 5 values,					
Standard weight	2650				
Actual (Aggregate weight)	1325				
Actual (Aggregate weight) as a percentage of standard weight					
$= \frac{1325 \times 100}{2650 \times 1}$					
= 50 percent					

**Decision:** Value calculated, 50 percent is equal (not greater nor less than) accepted mean value of 50 percent.

Based on the result, neither of the opinion is accepted nor rejected. It is a situation of indifference in opinion.

Relationship existing between ethics of PR and consensually accepted standards is undetermined.

**Interpretation:** Opinions are evenly divided as to the relationship existing between ethics in the practice of PR and consensually accepted standards of practice.

### 3.6 Analysis 6

Assessment of the impact of lack of confidentiality, competence, integrity and objectivity as ethical standards of practice of PR on fiduciary relationship as orbit of PR professionalism strive.

The analysis is based on selected questions in the areas of professionalism and professionalism obligations and liabilities as contained in the research questionnaire.

**Decision Rule:** If value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (acceptable mean), accept that the impact of lack of confidentiality, competence, integrity and objectivity as ethical standards have adverse effects on fiduciary relationship and PR's strive for professionalism.

If otherwise, reject.

The assessment is shown on table 6.

Table 6. Assessment of the lack of confidentiality, competence, integrity and objectivity on PR's strive for professionalism

Issues for Assessment	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1. Role of confidentiality, competence and Integrity in PR practice	25	30	20	30	1
2. Level of trust and ability to offer satisfactory services	30	27	18	31	∅
3. Assurance of willingness to accept obligations	20	32	20	28	6
4. Compliance with ethical standards and Avoidance of exploitation of clients	<u>15</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>34</u>
Score	90	110	70	119	41
Multiplier	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Weighted score	450	440	210	238	41
Aggregate weighted score	1379				
Based on table 6 values,					
Standard weight	2120				
Actual (Aggregate weight)	1379				
Actual (Aggregate weight) as a percentage standard weight					
= $\frac{1379 \times 100}{2120 \times 1}$					
= 65.05 percent					

**Decision:** Value calculated is 65.05 percent; this is greater than accepted mean of 50 percent. Thus accepted is the assertion that lack of confidentiality, incompetence, lack of integrity and objectivity reasonably negatively affect PR's strive for professionalism.

Reject the contrary view.

**Interpretation:** Inability to maintain confidentiality, high level of incompetence, lack of integrity and objectivity in the practice of PR erode clients' dependency on practitioners; hence the efforts at professionalizing PR have not yielded desired results.

### 3.7 Analysis 7

Finally, this research work determines whether or not the role of practitioners' discipline or indiscipline and the methods and procedures of discipline management as standards are necessary yardstick for the assessment of the ability of the profession to acquire the force of law, social responsibility and professionalism.

The analysis is based on a set of questions concerning work environments and professionalism as contained in the distributed questionnaire.

**Decision Rule:** Accept the assertion that the role of practitioners' indiscipline and the methods and procedures of discipline management as standards are necessary for the attainment of professional status in PR practice, if value calculated is greater than 50 (fifty) percent (accepted mean).

If on the contrary, reject the opinion.

The assessment of this opinion is shown on table 7.



Table 7. Assessment of the importance of discipline and its management as basis of professionalism in PR practice

Issues	Assessment				
	A=5	B=4	C=3	D=2	E=1
1. Clumsy and conflicting provisions of the PR code of practice	20	60	15	10	1
2. Emphasis on personal traits of practitioners	20	50	30	5	1
3. Emphasis on goal attainment within specific time	10	30	60	4	2
4. Emphasis on compliance with the provisions of the ethical code of practice	90	10	6	=	=
Score	140	150	111	19	4
Multiplier	5	4	3	2	1
Weighted score	700	600	333	38	4
Aggregate weighted score	1675				
Based on table 7 values,					
Standard weight	2120				
Actual (Aggregate weight)	1675				
Actual (aggregate weight) as a percentage standard weight					
$= \frac{2120 \times 100}{1675 \times 1}$					
=79.09 percent					

**Decision:** Accept the assertion that discipline management is vital among public relations practitioners, if the practice must attain professionalism, as value calculated 79.09 percent is greater than 50 percent (accept mean).

Rejected is the contrary opinion.

**Interpretation:** Public relations practitioners, clients/employers as well as interested members of the publics are of the view that lack of discipline and poor methods and procedures of managing disciplinary matters affect the practice of PR, hence standards are not maintained and professionalism as status is not achieved.

**Analysis based on Hypothesis:** The internal variables and their impacts on professionalism in the practice of Public Relations are considered in table 8 as follows, as drawn from tables 1-7

Table 8. Impact of internal variables on professionalism in the practice of public relations in Nigeria

Internal variable	Ideal Standard	Acceptable(%) Standard(%)	Actual Performance (%)
Job assessment by employers and clients	100	95	49.40
Public Relations practitioner's character/traits and work habit	100	98	98.81
Membership enlistment requirements and performance measurement	100	95	42.65
Impact of non-universality, inconsistency, non-culpability etc of ethics	100	95	91.61
Relationship between ethics in Public Relations and consensually accepted standard	100	98	50.00
Lack of confidentiality, competence integrity and objectivity on Public Relations strive for professionalism	100	98	65.05
Importance of discipline as basis of Professionalism in Public Relations	100	98	79.09

Comparing acceptable standard with actual performance in Public Relations performance in Nigeria as basis of assessing professionalism is based on various components of the rs as shown in table 9.

Table 9. The various components of the rs

%	%	R <sub>x</sub>	R <sub>y</sub>	R <sub>x</sub> - R <sub>y</sub>	(R <sub>y</sub> - y) <sup>2</sup>
Acceptable standard	Actual performance	Ranking of x	Ranking of y	=d	=d <sup>2</sup>
96	49.40	5	6	-1	0
98	98.81	2	1	1	0
95	42.65	6	7	-1	0
97	91.61	4	3	-1	0
99	50.00	1	5	-4	16
94	65.05	7	4	3	9
98	79.09	2	2	0	0

$$\sum d^2 = 25$$

Substituting for mathematical notation 1:

$$\begin{aligned} r_s &= \frac{1 - 6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)} \\ &= \frac{1 - 6(25)}{7(49 - 1)} \\ &= 0.55 \end{aligned}$$

The test of significance Qrs for this test statistics is conducted based on equation 2 represented as:

$$\begin{aligned} Q_{rs} &= \frac{Z - 1}{\sqrt{n - 1}} \\ &= \frac{1.96(1)}{\sqrt{7 - 1}} \\ &= 0.80 \end{aligned}$$

Where z is standard normal deviation and at 0.05 level of significance, is given as 1.96. Based on the results of the computations, the decision is to reject the alternative hypothesis, since rs is small than the Qrs. It is therefore the conclusion of this work that internal inadequacies in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria has significant impact on the derive to professionalism in the practice of Public Relations.

**Interpretation:** The interpretation is that the inability of Public Relations in Nigeria to manage the internal variables that promote professionalism in practices exerts significant negative influence on the practices' strive for professionalism, as such the practice of Public Relations is lowly rated in Nigeria.

#### 4. Conclusion on Assessed and Appraised Issues

The following are accepted assertions of this research work:

- That clients/employers of PR practitioners both in the private and public sector of the Nigerian economy are influenced positively by reduction in fees charged per periodic service output.
- Employers/clients, interested members of the public and public relations practitioners evaluate public relations practitioners' periodic output in terms of level of operational efficiency rather than accruable revenue due from the services.
- Variation in requirements for membership enlistment especially along cultural and geo-social regions is responsible for non-uniformity in public relations members' performance measurement.
- The non-universality, in consistency, non-culpability and non-importance of ethics as standards of the practice of public relations in Nigeria have negative impacts on the striving of PR for professionalism, thus the desired results are yet to be achieved.
- The public relations practitioners, employers/clients and interested members of publics have evenly divided opinions as to whether or not significant relationships do exist between the ethics of the practice of public relations and consensually accepted standards of the practice.
- Lack of confidentiality, incompetence, lack of integrity and objectivity in the practice of the public relations as ethical standards influence fiduciary relationship negatively, hence the orbit of public relations professionalism.
- Discipline, and methods and procedures of discipline management as standards are necessary measures of profession's acquisition of force of law, social responsibility and professionalism.

## 5. Conclusion

Professionalism is achievable in public relations practice based on existing frame work of ethics and standards. This is however a function of quality organizational leadership, anchored on good conflict and discipline management, improved information dissemination inters and intra organization, higher degree of freedom to practice within the frame work of laws and ethics and de-emphasis on high returns (revenue) or service charge.

## 6. Recommendations

Given operational structure, objectives, efficiency in administration and strive for professionalism with standard and ethics as orbits of the practice of public relations in Nigeria and the constraints there-to; the following recommendations are advanced.

- Nigerian Institute of Public Relations(NIPR) like in Auditing, and Quantity Surveying can eliminate or reduce the abuse of independency in fees/charges negotiations by classifying clients according to size of operation, turnover in operation, assets base etc, and charge fees as a percentage of organizations' /clients' period profit.
- The Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) could achieve consistency in practitioners' efficiency and clients' satisfaction through a device of periodic re-accreditation of practitioners. This will achieve the de-listing of practitioners found wanting in standards and ethics of the profession.
- In addition to basic qualifications to practice public relations, the Institute (NIPR) should insist on a one (1) or two (2) centre qualifier training, internship and examination that may span for a period of one (1) year. During this period, like in Law and Medicine, intending practitioners will be exposed to ethical values of the practice. This will reasonably, reduce or eliminate the social and cultural disparity that exist among public relations practitioners across the nation -Nigeria.
- More importance should be attached to ethics as the hallmark of the practice of PR, its application should be made universal and consistent. Breach of ethical standards should be viewed with seriousness and culprits should be subjected to appropriate disciplinary processes and actions. These actions will serve publicize the practice and boast the publics confidence in the practice.
- It is important that Nigeria Institute of Public Relations should review its ethical standards in consonance with societal norms and standards. Issues that lack universal acceptance should be expunged. Such up to date-reviewed ethics should be sworn to by intending members as condition for acceptance into membership and should serve as basis for evaluating and appraising membership and the practice of public relations.
- Nigeria Institute of Public Relations should keep and maintain up to date register of membership. Such register should be accessible to members of the public (this is, as it is in the practice of law and legal profession). Non-registered practitioners should be prosecuted.
- This however can only be achieved where there are clear differences between registered practitioners as qualified and quacks and armature as unqualified. This practice will eliminate the high incidence of quacks and armatures in the practice of public relations and obligations to clients and the publics will be more appreciated.
- Sections of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations code of practice especially those that deal with disputes and conflicts and discipline management are overdue for review. Members who are not satisfied with the internal Nigeria Institute of Public Relations dispute management structure should be at liberty to seek redress given conventional court of law processes. Sections of code of practice that make it an offence for practitioners to address issue concerning the institute (NIPR) without outside the institute without authorization should be amended to allow freedom of expression.
- The idea of campaigning for membership through organized and unorganized tour of institutions of higher learning especially those offering public relations as a course of study should be avoided. The practice should be self-dignified and interested and qualified members of the publics should subscribe for membership based on individual's or organization's volition.
- Seminars, workshops and talk-shops should be considered regular events. These in addition to up dating practitioners in skill and knowledge will enhance the organization's promotional efficiency.
- It is important that all current and potential clients of public relations practice to be educated on the objectives and principles of the practice. These above all will enable all clients of public relations to adjust their expectations of the practice and at all times reconcile the services rendered with agreed standards for better performance evaluation. The fore-gone will make up for the now existing lack of confidentiality, as practitioners would have been assessed as competent, persons of integrity and objectivity.

Finally, fiduciary relationship between the practice of PR and its publics would have been earned and professionalism achieved.

### 7. Limitations

Research of this nature in the contemporary Nigeria society as a developing nation has its result as less than accurate. The obvious is attributed to difficulties in information sourcing and sorting as the exercise is shrouded with secrecy.

However, the actual observed difficulty in information sourcing determines the level of confidence and reliance on the results of the research.

The assessment of practitioners (independent and employees) was based on objectivity principles; however, the question of subjectivity was unavoidable. This research was limited by the level of subjectivity in appraisal of responses.

The relative complexities imposed on the practice of public relations by the variance in practitioners' social, economic and cultural backgrounds constitute threats to uniformity in acceptance of standards and ethics even in the face of uniformity in educational attainment of members.

Another important limitation of this study is confinement of sample field to the state capitals and Abuja. These areas may not serve as adequate representations of public relations operational base (independent and employers) in Nigeria. It is important to state that the sourcing and weighing of information based on selected criteria is complex and time consuming; however, it is believed that the time was well spent.

Finally, the constraints posed on this research were managed based on effective selection, appraisal development and motivation of all material and human resources vital for this exercise, giving the use of appropriate statistical tools.

### References

- Akinbayo, A. A. (2000). Professional Codes of Ethics and Management Excellence. *Nigerian Institute of Management*, 40(5&6).
- Arlow, R., & Ulrich, T. A. (2000). Auditing Your Organization's Ethics. *Internal Auditor*, 35.
- Asika, N. M. (1991). *Research Methodology in the Behavioural Sciences*. Lagos: Longman Publishing.
- Badarocco, J. Jr., & Webb, A. (1995). Business Ethics: A View from the Trenches. *California Management Review*, 8–28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/41165786>
- Bateman, T. S., & Snell, S. A. (1999). *Management: Building Competitive Advantage* (4th ed.). Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
- Baucus, M., & Baucus, D. (2004). Organizational Ethics and Creativity: Breaking the Rules or Refining Business and Society Relationships. *International Associate Retail Relationships Journal of Retailing*, 72(3), 223–247.
- Berkowitz, E. N., Kerin, R. A., Hartley, S. W., & Rudelius. (2000). *Marketing* (6th ed.). Boston. Irwin: McGraw-Hill.
- Brenner, S., & Molander, E. (1989). Is the Ethics of Business Changing? In Andrews K. Cambridge (Ed.), *Ethics in Practice Managing the Moral Corporation*. MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Bucholz, R. A. (2003). *Fundamental Concept and Problems in Business Ethics*. Prentice–Hall Englewood Cliffs (NJ).
- Business and Professional Ethics. (1995). University of Maryland University College, USA.
- Cooper, R. W., & Frank, G. L. (2002). Ethical Challenges in the Two Main Segments of the Insurance Industry: Key Considerations in the Evolving Financial Services Marketplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 36, 5–20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1014235908833>
- De George, R. T. (1990). *Business Ethics* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Farnham, A. (1993). State Your Values, Hold the HOI Air. *Fortune*, April, 17–24.
- Farnham, A. (1995). Brushing Up Your Vision Thing. *Fortune*, 129.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1990). *Official Gazette*, 37(77). Lagos: Printed and Published by the Federal Government Press, Lagos-Nigeria.
- Ferrell, O. C., & Fraedrich, J. (1997). *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making & Cases* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Ferrell, T. A., & Hall, T. E., & White, D. D. (2001). Wilderness Campers, Perspective and Evaluation of

- Campsite Impacts. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 33(3), 229–250.
- Ganesh, J., Arnold, M. J., & Reynolds, K. E. (2000). Understanding the Customer Base of Service Providers: An Examination of the Differences between Switchers and Stayers. *Journal of Marketing*, 64, 65–87. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.64.3.65.18028>
- Guy, M. E. (1990). *Ethical Decision Making in Everyday Work Situation*. New York: Quorum Books.
- Hall, F., & Hall, E. (1994). The ADA: Going Beyond the Law. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 7–13.
- Hegaty, W., & Sims, H., Jr. (2004). Some Determinants of Unethical Decision Behaviour: An Experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(4).
- Horgren, E. T., & Sundern, G. L. (1990). *Introduction to Management Accounting* (8th ed.). New Delhi Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- Jamsen, E., & Gilnow, M. A. (2000). Ethical Ambivalence and Organizational Reward Systems. *Academy of Managerial Review*, 3(2).
- Jefkin, F. (1985). *Introduction to Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations*. London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Kecmannovic, D. C. (2005). A Sensemaking Theory of Knowledge in Organizations and Its Application. In E. S. Joseph Davis (Ed.), *Knowledge Management Sydney* (pp. 55–74). [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/3-7908-1618-3\\_3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/3-7908-1618-3_3)
- Kohlberg, L., & Candee, D. (1984). The Relationship of Moral Judgement is Moral Action. In Kurtines, W. M., & Gerwitz, J. L. (Eds.), *Morality, Moral Behaviour and Moral Development*. New York: John Wiler & Sons.
- Kok, P., & Weile, T. V. D., & Mckenna, R., & Brown, A. (2001). A Corporate Social Responsibility Audit within a Quality Management Framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 31(4), 285–297. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1010767001610>
- Koontz, H., O'Donnell, C., & Wehrich, H. (1980). *Management* (7th ed.). McGraw Hill. International Book Company London.
- Krohe, J. Jr. (1997). Ethics Are Nice, but Business is Business. *Across the Board*, 16–22.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2009). *Marketing Management* (13th ed.). London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Kotler P., & Armstrong, G. (2010). *Principles of Marketing* (13th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson Education Ltd.
- Laczniaik, G. (1983). Business Ethics: A Manager's Primer in Business Ethics: Annual Edition 1994/95. (Guilford Company: The Dushkin Publishing Group. Inc (1994) 6–12 Reprinted from Business Jan-Feb-March 23-9.
- Laczniaik, G., Berkowitz, M., Brookes, R., & Hale, J. (1995). The Business of Ethics: Improving or Deteriorating. *Business Horizons*, 39–42. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813\(95\)90102-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813(95)90102-7)
- Lantos, G. (2002). The Ethicality of Altruistic Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 19(3), 205–236. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363760210426049>
- Lyman, D. (2006). Business Ethics an Asian Perspective, Global Executive Meeting of MBA Class of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Maigman, I., & Ferrell, O. C. (2004). Corporate Social Responsibility and Marketing: An Integrative Framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(1), 3–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0092070303258971>
- Marianne, M. J. (2008). *Foundations of the Legal Environment of Business*, South-Western College Publications (1st ed.).
- McPhail, K. (2001). The Other Objectives of Ethics Education: Re-humanising the Accountancy Profession-A Study of Ethics Education in Law, Engineering, Medicine and Accountancy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 34, 279–298. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1012576631990>
- Moir, L. (2001). What Do We Mean By Corporate Social Responsibility? Corporate Governance. *International Journal of Business in Society*, 1(2), 16–22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000005486>
- Mullin, M. K. S. (2004). Some Important Factors Underlying Ethical Decisions of Middle-Eastern Marketers. *International Marketing Review*, 53–67.
- Nelson, R. P. (1987). What Can Managers Do About Unethical Management? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 309–320. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00382940>

- Nigeria Institute of Public Relations. (1992). Code of Professional Conduct Bye-law. No.1. Printed and Published by the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations.
- OKO, A. E. N. (2002). *Public Relations, Advertising and Other Promotions, Skinno Prints*. Uwani Enugu-Nigeria.
- OKO, A. E. N. (2003). *Standards, Ethics and Professionalism in Public Relations Practice: An Appraisal*. M.Sc Public Relations Dissertation, Enugu, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus.
- Paine, L. S. (1994). Managing for Organizational Integrity. *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 106–117.
- Peterson, D. K. (2003). The Relationship between Ethical Pressure, Relativistic Moral Beliefs and Organizational Commitment. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 16(6), 557–572. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683940310494386>
- Preston, L., & Post, J. (1975). *Management and Public Policy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Post, J. E., Lawrence, A. T., & Weber, J. (2002). *Business and Society: Corporate Strategy, Public Policy, Ethic* (10th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Shah, J. I. (2001). Ethics in Organizations and Leadership Response. *Pakistan Air Forces*, 105–126.
- Solomon, M. R., Surprenant, C., Czepiel, J. A., & Gutman, E. G. (1985). A Role Theory Perspective on Dyadic Interactions: The Service Encounter. *Journal of Marketing*, 49, 99–111. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1251180>
- Szekely, F., & Knirsch, M. (2005). Responsible Leadership and Corporate Social Responsibility: Metrics for Sustainable Performance. *European Management Journal*, 23(6), 628–647. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2005.10.009>
- Takala, T. (2010). Multiculturalism and Ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 15(1), 4.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. (2004). Entrepreneurship and SMEs Business Ethics for Start-Up Entrepreneurs and SMEs
- Vitell, S. J., & Davis, D. L. (1990). The Relationship between Ethics and Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Investigation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9, 489–494. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00382842>
- Wasden, L. (2007). Office of the Attorney General, Idaho Ethics in Government Manual.
- Weber, D. O. (2005). Unethical Business Practices in US Health Care. Alarm Physician Leaders.
- Wehmeier, S., McIntosh, C., Turnbull, J., & Ashyby, M. (2005). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. New York: A. S. Hornby.

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).