

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES AND THE IMAGE OF NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, RIVERS STATE COMMAND

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the public relations strategies and the image of Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command. The Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command is a government institution whose main function is to provide a credible correctional service that secures, reforms, rehabilitates and reintegrates offenders into the society and to provide excellent custodial and non-custodial service that promotes public protection in accordance with global best practices needs a functional public relations practice in order to gain public trust and confidence. For this reason, the study sought to find out the public relations strategies that were adopted by the command. To achieve this, the study raised four objectives which are to find out the channels of communication used by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command, to find out the public relations strategies used by the command to build favourable public image; ascertain the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command for the inmates, etc. The study adopted two theories, Attitude change theory and Status Conferral theory. The study used survey as the research design while questionnaire was used as data gathering instrument. The population of the study comprised of two streams of universe, all the staff of the four Nigerian Correctional Services in Rivers State namely; Ahoada, Elele, Port Harcourt and Degema and their in-mates. The total population of the study is 5,920. Taro Yamane Sample Size determination formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 375. Purposive sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. Weighted mean score (four points likert scale) was used to analyze the data. Findings of the study revealed that the command used channels of communication such as radio, newspapers and television. The findings of the study also showed that the command applied public relations strategies such as know your audience, disseminate the message yourself, news/press releases, special events and interviews. The findings of the study also showed that the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates included formal education, moral and vocational education, moral and vocational education, counseling and religious activities. The study concluded that the command used channels of communication such as radio newspapers and television and that the command applied public relations strategies such as know your audience, disseminate the message yourself, news/press releases, etc. The study recommended that it will be ideal for the Nigerian Correctional Services and other correctional centres to adopt and apply effective approaches of relating with visitors and their inmates.

Keywords: Public Relations, Strategies, Image, Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command

INTRODUCTION

Prisons are public institution founded by government for the restoration and transformation of persons found guilty or who went against the law of the Land. Prison is seen as a physical structure located at a particular geographical area which has a kind of social environment that is not the same as the largest society where individuals live as specific conditions. Everywhere throughout the world, prisons are built up to fill in as rehabilitation and informatory establishment with a definitive objective or orientation and improving prisoners so they could come out as useful citizenery (Okeke, 2010). This establishment was set up to help criminal justice system in which criminal offenses are confined pending the final conviction or decision is taken to decide the guilt or Innocence of the accuse individual. Subsequently, incarceration in the event of being found guilty is implemented. Individuals who have been charged or sentenced for one criminal offense or more are required to get reoriented and turn out to be better to live in the general public when they leave the prison (Okeke, 2010).

Arising from the establishment of these courts and the police was the need for a prison. Therefore, in 1872, at Broad Street, Lagos, a prison with the capacity of 300 inmates was established. In the Niger Delta, there had been special courts of merchants backed by the British Navy. These courts took charge of disputes between the merchants and the local traders. More impetus was added to these courts with the appointment of John Beecroft as a consult in 1849. At the initial time, the major causes of disputes were commercial. There were signs that a prison existed in Bonny at this era where Kings Jaja of Opobo and Dappa of Bonny, who opposed the British rule were confined (Jaja, 1994). Furthermore, as the British advanced into the hinterland in the 19th Century, the need for more Nigerian Correctional Services arose. By 1910, there were Nigerian Correctional Services in Degema, Calabar, Onitsha, Benin, Ibadan, Sapele, Jebba and Lokoja. Later, the East, West and North were declared protectorates in 1906 and this made the entire country to be under one British government but this development did not mark unified Nigerian Correctional Services as the colonial authority was not prepared to spend more money for this purpose (Orakwe, 2015).

Moreso, the colonial prison system was not designed to reform the inmates as there was no systematic penal policy. The prisoners, at this time, were used for public and other odd jobs for the colonial administration. At this era, too, there were no trained prison officers, but the police also performed prison duties. Later, ex-servicemen were appointed to do the job. The poor prison condition at the period varied from place to place and generally there were disorganization, exploitation, inhuman treatment of the inmates and poorly paid workforce. The main objective of the prison system was purely punitive measure for those who opposed the British rule. The idea of rehabilitation was not given a thought (Jaja, 1994).

However, in 1917, there was a publication of prison regulation to prescribe admission, custody, treatment and classification procedure, staffing, dieting and clothing regimes for the Nigerian Correctional Services. Though these reforms did not spell out the particular way the inmates should be securely kept out of the society. There was a dual system which led to dual prison system (Orakwe, 2015). According to Orakwe (2013) the Nigerian Prisons Service was changed to Nigerian Correctional Services on the 15th of August, 2019 after signing the Nigerian Correctional Services Act of 2019 into law. The essence is that the institution was established mainly for reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration of inmates to the society. Basically, the Public Relations Department of the Nigerian Correctional Services is to maintain a favourable public image. Also, it strives to really put

more focus on their relationship with the public and how they engage with the organization on a regular basis.

The continuous detention of inmates without a speedy trial is usually frowned at by the public. Therefore, the public relations tend to ensure that unlawful detention and delays in trial are eradicated. The public relations department also strives to ensure that the Nigerian Correctional Services (NPS) maintains the three cardinal points as the hallmark of its agenda, as a correctional centre namely; inmate training, infrastructure development and staff training and re-training. Thus, this study investigates the public relations strategies and the image of Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State command.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian Correctional Services do not just keep convicts and awaiting trials from the society but essentially perform other functions to help the ex-convicts and the society. These functions include reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration of the ex-prisoners back into the society. For instance, the reintegration programmes are special programmes called After-care Services offered by specially trained welfare officers called After-Care Officers.

It is also meant for reduction of recidivism through group and individual empowerment of ex-convicts. The Nigerian Correctional Services also makes effort to hold conferences and meetings with the community to get it prepared to receive these ex-convicts.

Basically, the functions of the public relations department of the Nigerian Prison is to maintain a favourable public image. Also, it strives to really put more focus on their relationship with the public and how they engage with them on a regular basis. The continuous detention of inmates without a speedy trail is usually frowned at by the public. The public relations tend to ensure that some of these unlawful detentions and delay in trial are eradicated. This has resulted in inmates breaking the Nigerian Correctional Services most times.

Nigerian Correctional Services in Nigeria are dehumanizing and the public relations have made frantic efforts to draw the attention of both the government and the public for a reform. The public relations department strives to ensure that the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCS) maintains the three cardinal points as the hallmark of its agenda: as a correctional centre namely inmate training, infrastructure development and staff training and re-training.

From the efforts of the public relations department, one of the cardinal reform programs of the Nigerian Correctional Services is re-integration of inmates back into the society after serving their jail terms. The public relations officer of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State command Mrs. Obi Vivian maintained that the prison after care services has recorded successes that have helped keep disengaged persons on the straight path instead of going back to a life of crime. She said "on discharge, we have the after care services whose duty is to follow up the discharged persons. It is on this backdrop that this study investigates the public relations strategies of Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to find out the public relations strategies that are adopted by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. find out the channels of communication that are used by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command.

2. identify the public relations strategies that are used by the command to build a favourable public image.
3. ascertain the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration programmes of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command for the inmates.
4. find out approaches adopted by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command in relating with visitors and their inmates.

Research Questions

1. What are the channels of communication used by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command?
2. What are the public relations strategies adopted by command to build favourable public image?
3. What are the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration programmes of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command for the inmates?
4. What are the approaches adopted by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command in relating with visitors and their inmates?

Conceptual Review

Correctional Institutions in Nigeria

Correctional institutions means different things to different persons, Iwanme-Jaja (2013) states that in criminology it refers to valid presentation of certain government facilities, agencies, programmes, techniques, methods and procedures of the personnel involved in different aspects of investigations; intakes of inmates for correctional services, custody, confinement, supervision, treatment or management of alleged, adjudicated or convicted sentenced adult or juvenile offenders. Furthermore, Krantz (1973) states that corrections means, jail, juvenile training schools probation and parole machinery as that part of the criminal justice system that the public sees least of and knows least about (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2013).

Nigerian Correctional Services in Nigeria

There were no formal Nigerian Correctional Services in Nigeria till 1861 when the British came for colonization and trade. When the British Colonial Administration was established in Nigeria, there was a traditional or customary method of punishment or treatment of criminals which entailed oath taking blood money banishment, ostracism, labour or fine (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2013). It is noteworthy that these types of punishment and customary Nigerian Correctional Services in the king's palace did not entail reformation or rehabilitation of prisoners as they were only meant to punish criminals (Orakwe, 2013).

Major historical developments like the stoppage of slave trade and the Industrial Revolution in Europe combined to aid to establishment of Nigerian Correctional Services as in Western Nigeria to punish traditional rulers who refused to stop slave trade. Though, during the industrial Revolution, machines started doing the work slaves were made to do, some colonial merchants and African traditional rulers refused to stop the lucrative slave trade. The colonial Nigerian Correctional Services were meant for them. This was why the Broad Street Prison was built in 1872 in Lagos (Obiandu, 2007).

Obiandu (2007) states further the 'Huck' (movable container or caravans) which was initially used to cage captured slaves by a slave dealer in 1872 was converted to a prison. The previously used to house slaves but was later used as a prison in Degema. The name Degema was consulate and the original owner of the Huck was George Shottom Huck — a

popular slave dealer. Other Nigerian Correctional Services were established in Benin, Ahoada, Arochukwu and Calabar 1901 (Obiandu, 2009). Apart from slave trade, there were genuine businesses between the British and Africans. This gave rise to the establishment of Colonial Criminal Justice System and Colonial Nigerian Correctional Services by the Colonial Administrators between 1861 and 1872. By 1910, there were Nigerian Correctional Services in different areas of the colony - Sapele, Ibadan and Lakija. These Nigerian Correctional Services were not meant for reformation of inmates but for purely incarceration and punishment of the inmates. There were no trained prison officers as policemen manned the Nigerian Correctional Services but later ex-service men were recruited, and were called wardens. By 1917 the British Colonial Administrators introduced prison regulation which prescribed the method of "admission, custody, treatment and classification procedures, including staffing, dieting and clothing regime for Nigerian Correctional Services; distinguished between Awaiting Trial and convicted for each type of prison (Orakwe, 2013). Furthermore, in 1934 modernization of Nigerian Correctional Services into a unified prison structure and Nigerian Correctional Services Wardens Welfare Board were created. In 1917 vocational training for inmates were introduced, but failed and re-introduced in 1949 as a form of therapy in Nigerian Correctional Services. Also, moral and adult education was introduced for relaxation of inmates. By 1948, reformations were established for the treatment of juvenile delinquents (Orakwe, 2013). By 1968, all Nigerian Correctional Services were owned by the Federal Government. The dual system of colonial and native authority Nigerian Correctional Services in the country was abolished and all the Nigerian Correctional Services re-organised further in 1972 by Decree No. 9 (Twarimie — Jaja, 2013).

Brief History of Nigerian Correctional Services

The origin of modern Nigerian Correctional Services in Nigeria is 1861. That was the year when conceptually, Western type of prison was established in Nigeria. The declaration of Lagos as a colony in 1861 marked the beginning of the institution of formal machinery of governance. At this stage, the preoccupation of the colonial government was to protect legitimate trade, guarantee the profit of British merchants as well as guarantee the activities of the missionaries. To this end, by 1861, the acting governor of Lagos colony who was then a prominent British merchant in Lagos, formed a police force of about 25 constables. As a result, he established four courts in Lagos in 1860 namely a police court to resolve petty disputes, a criminal court to try the more serious cases, a slave court to try cases arising from the efforts to abolish the trade in slaves and a commercial court to resolve disputes among merchants and traders (Nwankwo, 2006).

However, the progressive incursion of the British into the hinter land and establishment of British protectorate towards the end of the 19th century necessitated the establishment of the Nigerian Correctional Services as last link in the criminal justice system. Thus, by 1910, there already were Nigerian Correctional Services in Degema, Calabar, Onitsha, Benin, Ibadan, Sapele, Jebba and Lokoja (Lawless, 1972). The abolition of native authority Nigerian Correctional Services in 1968 and the subsequent unification of the Nigerian Correctional Services in Nigeria therefore marked the beginning of Nigerian Correctional Services as a composite reality. Prior to this, the Nigerian Correctional Services in the North were under the general supervision of the Northern Inspector General of Police who was ex-officio Director of Nigerian Correctional Services. In the same vein the Director of Nigerian Correctional Services was in charge of the Nigerian Correctional Services in the South. The Gobi report put an end to all that. As a consequence of that report, native Authority Nigerian Correctional Services were abolished with effect from 1 April, 1968. However, due to the

vagaries of the civil war then raging in the country, it was not until 1971 that the government white paper on the reorganization of the Nigerian Correctional Services was released. It was 1972 by Decree No. 9 of 1972 which spelt out the goals and orientations of the Nigerian Correctional Services. The Nigerian Correctional Services was charged with taking custody of those legally detained, identifying causes of their behaviour and retraining them to become useful citizens in the society (Lawless, 1972).

Types of Nigerian Correctional Services

There are three types of Nigerian Correctional Services, namely: maximum, medium and minimum security Nigerian Correctional Services or facilities. The maximum security facilities are enclosure kind of Nigerian Correctional Services with concrete walls and guarded by armed guards. They are made for dangerous offenders and convicted persons serving long sentences. These depict the goals of isolation, incapacitation and revenge. Rehabilitation programmes are in often in name only (Cox and Wade, 1998). On the other hand, the medium security facilities are not as large in size as the maximum security Nigerian Correctional Services. Though smaller in size, physically it resembles the maximum security Nigerian Correctional Services. They house less dangerous offenders and they aim at rehabilitating and movement within them is not seriously restricted as maximum security Nigerian Correctional Services (Cox and Wade, 1998). The minimum security facilities are built for non-violent and non-traditional offenders. Their internal structure is designed as private rooms for dormitory style living. They are not guarded by armed guards and they have no high walls (Cox and Wade, 1998).

Objectives of Imprisonment

Nigerian Correctional Services have three main objectives namely: retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation.

a. Retribution

Retribution seeks revenge and is one of the oldest known objectives of punishment. It is based on the philosophy that equal or proportionate relationship should be created between the offenders and the punishment. In other words, it demands the offenders should suffer as the victim he or she has caused to suffer. This is not an easy task to equate offence with amount of punishment (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2013).

b. Deterrence

The aim of punishment may be deterrence specifically or generally. In criminal justice context deterrence is a sentencing technique of punishment applied in controlling crime by reducing the motivation for crime by increasing the certainty, severity or celerity of penalties (Vila, 1994). Schmallerger (2009) argues that to prevent a particular offender from engaging in repeat criminality.

Iwarimie-Jaja (2011), states that technique (deterrence) is "to deter... the general society from committing crime" (p. 291). Iwarimie-Jaja is of the opinion that general deterrence policy on crime reduction discourages intending criminals from engaging in criminal acts while specific deterrence prevents a particular criminal offender from committing crime in future.

c. Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of prisoners is premised on the idea that punishment should fit the criminal rather than the crime. What this means is that if the history of the criminal offenders is known that is what influenced him or her to commit a crime is known, then it will be easy to rehabilitate the offender by modifying his behaviour. This is a humanistic point of view

assuming that people who commit crime have basic reason or motive for doing so; and if such reason is researched and discovered, such reason could be discouraged and the offender rehabilitated. Though, Iwarirnie-Jaja, 2013) states that rehabilitation is not a constitutional right of the prisoners and so many Nigerian Correctional Services do not practise it.

Prison Welfare Services

Prison welfare services involve several social, economic, cultural, medical, psychological and psychiatric services that are rendered by professionals like social workers, clergy, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists. Welfare services in Nigerian Correctional Services include counselling, therapy, vocational, educational and recreational programmes. These services are intended by the Nigerian Correctional Services to reduce recidivism rates (Cox and Wade, 1998).

Public Relations

Ikechukwu (2007) presents Jobber (1998) definition of public relations as: the management of communications and relationships to establish goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its public (p.115). Moore and Kalupa (2007) present the definition of public relations by Public Relations News and state that "public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitude, identify the policies and procedures of and individual or organization with the public interest and executes a programme of action to learn the understanding and acceptance' (p.5). The following definition is suggested by Moore and Kalupa (2002) as: "public relations is a social philosophy of management expressed in policies and practices, which through sensitive interpretation of events based upon two way communication with its publics, strives to secure mutual understanding and goodwill" (p. 5).

Going by the above definitions, public relations is composed of four basic elements. First, is a social management philosophy; second, it is an expression of this philosophy in policy decisions, third, it is action resulting from these policies and fourth, it is two-way communication that contributes toward the creation of these policies and these explains, defends or promotes them the public so as to secure mutual understanding and goodwill (Uduji, 2007).

Marston (1960) earlier asserts that public relations based on social philosophy of management places the interests of the people first all matters pertaining to the conduct of the organization. This concern is informed by the belief that the right of an organization to operate is conferred by the public and that this privilege may be withdrawn if the organization fails to recognize this. Moore and Kalupa (2007) capture this position when they quote the words of Band (1980), a pioneer in modern public relations as saying: "public relations is a fundamental attitude of mind, a philosophy of management, which deliberates and with enlightened selfishness places the broad interests of the public first in every decision affecting the operation of a business" (p. 7).

Furthermore, Lendt (1975) states that public relations taken as a social philosophy expressed in policy decisions makes institutions have policies that define a course of action to be followed in the conduct of the enterprise that creates policies which cover a range of functions that form the primary responsibility of management. In this case, the Nigerian Correctional Services.

The Main Elements of Public Relations

Wragg (1992) mentions the following as the main elements or aspects of public relations:

- i. **Media relations:** This was formerly known as press relations. This new term recognizes the importance of broadcasting, including systems that view data and other screen based information systems.
- ii. **Employees communication:** Employees constitute a very important audience for any organization regardless of its activity. This is why some organizations have structures for either internal communications or staff communications.
- iii. **Political relations:** Organizations, whether engaged in commercial, charitable, political security, etc, will depend heavily in good public relations with politicians and their advisers.
- iv. **Corporate identity:** Corporate identity or image issues have become important to many organizations. The issues are more than just glossy logo but extend to the way in which the organizations relate to all of their stakeholders.
- v. **Community relations:** This covers a wide range of activity including contact with pressure groups or important target like community leaders, social groups and even students. These among others are the important elements of public relations function.

Public Relations Strategies

1. Develop a clear communication pattern
2. Create quality press materials
3. Build relationships with journalists
4. Organize press conferences and events
5. Established an online presence.

The Image of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command

Perceptions of the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCS) are multifaceted, shaped by a complex interplay of factors including personal experiences, societal attitudes, media portrayal, and the broader context of Nigeria's criminal justice system. These perceptions encompass a spectrum ranging from concerns about overcrowding and security to hope for rehabilitation and reform. At the forefront of public perception is the issue of overcrowding within Nigerian prisons (Dmakin, 1987). Many view the NCS as struggling to cope with the sheer volume of inmates, leading to deplorable living conditions and compromised safety. Overcrowded cells, limited access to sanitation facilities, and inadequate healthcare concerns about human dignity and basic rights. Reports of disease outbreaks and instances of violence among inmates underscore the urgent need for reforms to address this pressing issue.

Security concerns also loom large in the public's perception of the NCS. High-profile prison breaks, sometimes facilitated by corrupt officials or external actors, highlight vulnerabilities within the system. Instances of violence within prisons, including clashes between inmates or attacks on staff, contribute to a sense of insecurity both for those incarcerated and for the broader community. Such incidents fuel skepticism about the NCS's ability to fulfill its mandate of ensuring public safety and rehabilitation (Dometh, 1970). Furthermore, there are widespread misgivings about the efficacy of rehabilitation efforts within Nigerian prisons. Many perceive the focus on punishment over rehabilitation as counterproductive, with limited resources allocated to educational and vocational training programmes for inmates. Concerns about recidivism persist, as former inmates often struggle to reintegrate

into society due to stigma and lack of support. Skeptics argue that without meaningful investments in rehabilitation, the cycle of crime and incarceration will continue unabated. Human rights issues represent another critical dimension of public perception regarding the NCS. Human rights organizations and activists frequently denounce instances of arbitrary detention, torture, and other forms of abuse within Nigerian prisons. Allegations of corruption among prison staff, including soliciting bribes or extorting inmates, further erode trust in the institution's ability to uphold fundamental rights and principles of justice. Such violations not only undermine the legitimacy of the NCS but also tarnish Nigeria's international reputation (Dominick, 1993).

Despite these challenges, there are glimmers of hope and optimism regarding the future of the NCS. Initiatives aimed at decongesting prisons, improving infrastructure, and enhancing staff training signal a commitment to reform. The rebranding from "prison service" to "correctional service" reflects a broader shift towards a more rehabilitative approach to criminal justice. Advocates for reform advocate for greater transparency and accountability within the NCS, calling for increased oversight mechanisms and public engagement. Perceptions of the Nigerian Correctional Services are complex and nuanced, encompassing concerns about overcrowding, security, rehabilitation, and human rights. While challenges persist, there is a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive reforms to address systemic shortcomings and uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals within the correctional system. By fostering dialogue, fostering transparency, and fostering a culture of accountability, Nigeria can move towards a more just and effective approach to corrections, one that reflects its commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Ese, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted theories which are; The Attitude Change and Status Conferral theories.

The Attitude Change Theory

This theory according to Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2008) was propounded by Daniel Katz, Irving Saruoff and Charles McClintock in 1960. Katz and his associates state that human beings are both rational and irrational depending on the situation, the motivations operating at the time. They argue that the tendency for people to act with different ways of reasoning has important implications for understanding attitude changes.

Hence, classic view of attitudes is that attitudes serve particular functions for individuals. That is, researchers have tried to understand why individuals hold particular attitudes or why they hold attitudes in general by considering how attitudes affect the individuals who hold them. Daniel Krantz (1988) for example, writes that attitudes can serve "instrumental, adjustive or utilitarian", "ego-defensive", "value-expressive," or "knowledge" functions. The functional view of attitudes suggests that in order for attitudes to change (e.g., via persuasion), appeals must be made to the function(s) that a particular attitude serves for the individual. As an example, for "ego-defensive" function might be used to influence the racially prejudicial attitudes of an individual who sees themselves as open-minded and tolerant. By appealing to that individual's image of themselves as tolerant, open-minded, it may be possible to change their prejudicial attitudes to be more consistent with their self-concept. Similarly, a persuasive message that threatens self-image is much more likely to be rejected.

Krantz (1988) classified attitudes into four different groups based on their functions:

- a. **Utilitarian:** Provides us with general approach or avoidance tendencies.
- b. **Knowledge:** Help people organise and interpret new information

c. **Ego-defensive:** Attitudes can help people protect their self-esteem.

d. **Value-expression:** Used to express central values or beliefs.

This theory is relevant to the study in the sense that the prisoners could be reformed through counselling (telling them that, there are best ways to live a successful life outside crime) and the public could be prepared to be ex-convict friendly through public relations practice using communication as one of the major tools.

Status Conferral Theory

Status Conferral theory is a term created by Lazarfeld and Merton (1948) when explaining the functions and power that the mass media have in our society. This theory was propounded by Paul Lazarfeld and Robert Merton in 1948. They maintained that the mass media have the ability to force so much information from anywhere, at any given time, about any topic, that they can make this topic seem like the most pressing matter to date. This can be for a number of reasons, will it get a station the most views? Will it give us the opportunity to make money? Will it give attention from a more pressing issue or topic?

Without even noticing it, the society, fall under the assumption that just because we see this person, or read about this event that took place, that it is of the utmost significance, just because of the amount of which we see it. It is happening all the time all around us. Subtle mentions of a person or seeing their face in a commercial make us think that the person is "worth" the mentions and that they are actually worth the attention, just because we are seeing their face or hearing their voice constantly, with the new improvements in technology and the advances in communication, it is happening more frequently.

This theory is relevant to the study with respect to the reformation and rehabilitation programmes offered to the inmates. In the process, some of the inmates become so reformed that probation and after Care Service Officers recommend good time and early release of these convicts even before the completion of their jail term. The Nigerian prisons, Rivers State Command if armed with this theory would endeavour to project well-behaved convicts before they are released and make the communities to become ex-convicts friendly by featuring them regularly on the media.

Empirical Review

Nwachukwu (2008) carried out a research titled "An Assessment of Cordially Effects of Public Relations Strategies Adopted by National Institute for Nigeria Languages (MINLAN), Aba in the Management of the 2004-2006 Internal Crises". The aim of this study was to identify the public relations activities that could help organizations manage internal crises, maintain and sustain organizational harmony, growth and survival. Towards this end, the study made use of opinion survey for data collection while the instruments were personal interview and questionnaire. Personal interview was used to obtain information from the head of information, Protocol and Public Relations Department of the Institute on public relations activities of the Institute. Also, the study used systematic sampling method to get 20% of the staff strength of 250 of the institute.

In this regard, the study found out that the institute did not take public relations seriously hence the crisis that engulfed the Institute could not be handled and resolved until President Obasanjo finally closed down the Institute. Therefore, the study recommended functional public relations activities to organizations and government if they must stay out of crisis. Although the study review was carried out on academic institute and not on paramilitary, it has relevance with this study because it dealt with issues of social relationships among management, staff and other stakeholders in that establishment and the present study is

not different because it is about social relationship between the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command and its publics.

Umelo and Nyemezu (2023) carried out a study entitled: Influence of Public Relation on Service Delivery in Rivers State University Library. This study examined the role of public relations in delivering effective library services in Rivers State University. The study adopted descriptive survey design and was guided by four objectives and four corresponding research questions. The Melvin Model and the Two-way-symmetric model of public relations were adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The study population is thirty (30) library staff of all cadres in Rivers State University Library. Complete census was adopted because the population was manageable. The study observed that Rivers State University Library renders services that facilitate good public relations such as lending services, inter-library loan services, reservation services, exhibitions display etc. The findings further suggest that there is passion from library staff to engage in public relation activities; unfortunately the library needs to improve in their public relations strategies for a successful public relations endeavour. Identified problems such as insufficient fund to acquire public relation tools, absence of public relation department and library public relation officer, absence of library involvement in the university and student social activities etc. could be the stimulating factors for the reduced public relation strategies in Rivers State University library. The study recommends that expansive public relation strategies need to be developed and implemented in order to stimulate library public support and instigate demand for their services.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology depicts the various techniques and procedures to be used in carrying out a study and the analytical treatment of data collected. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised of two streams of universe, all staff of the four Nigerian Correctional Services in Rivers State namely; Ahoada, Elele, Port Harcourt and Degema and their in-mates. The total population of the study was 5,920. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. Taro Yamane Sample Size determination formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 375. Purposive sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire and the response rate was 370 which was used in analyzing the data. The items on the questionnaire were structured using the Likert ratio scale of Strongly Agree (SD – 4), Agree (A – 3), Disagree (D – 2), Strongly Disagree (SD – 1). Mean and rank orders statistical methods were used in relation to the items of factors studied. Conclusion was made in the calculated mean scorer. A criterion mean is 2.5. Any item that has mean score which is below 2.5 was regarded as negative and therefore rejected while any score from 2.5 and above was regarded as positive and thus accepted.

Research Question 1: What are the channels of communication used by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command?**Table 1: The channels of communication used by the Nigerian Correctional Services**

S/N	Respondent's view Items	Nature of Response						
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL L	MEAN N	DECISION N
1.	The Nigerian Correctional Services used Radio	200	100	50	20	370	3.29	Accepted
	Extent	80	300	100	20	1,220		
2.	One of the channel of communication used by NCS is Newspaper	180	120	40	30	370	3.21	Accepted
	Extent	720	360	80	30	1,190		
3.	Television was another channel of communication used by NCS	220	120	20	10	370	3.48	Accepted
	Extent	880	360	40	10	1,290		
4.	Nigerian Correctional Services used memos as channels of communication	250	80	20	20	370	3.51	Accepted
	Extent	1000	240	40	20	1,300		

Criterion Mean = 2.50

In table 1 above, the Nigerian Correctional Services used the following as channels of communication; Radio, television, newspapers and memos.

Research Question 2: What are the public relations strategies adopted by the command to build favourable public image?**Table 2: Public relations strategies adopted by the command to build a favourable public image**

S/N	Respondent's view Items	Nature of Response						
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL L	MEAN N	DECISION N
1.	The command used press release	220	100	30	20	370	3.40	Accepted
	Extent	880	300	60	20	1,260		
2.	Newsletters and special events were also used	180	120	40	30	370	3.21	Accepted
	Extent	720	360	80	30	1,190		
3.	The command adopted interviews as part of its Public Relations strategies	200	100	50	20	370	3.29	Accepted
	Extent	800	300	100	20	1,220		

4.	Know your audience and disseminate the message yourself	250	80	20	20	370		
	Extent	1000	240	40	20	1,300	3.51	Accepted

Criterion Mean = 2.50

The data presented in table 2 above shows that the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command adopted the following public relations strategies; press release, newsletter and special events, interview, know yourself and disseminate the message yourself.

Research Question 3: What are the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration programmes of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command for the inmates?

Table 3: Methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration programme of the command for the inmates

S/N	Respondent's view Items	Nature of Response						
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL L	MEAN N	DECISION N
1.	Taking custody of persons legally interned	250	90	20	10	370		
	Extent	1000	270	40	10	1,320	3.36	Accepted
2.	Providing safe, secure and humane custody for inmates	180	120	40	30	370		
	Extent	720	360	80	30	1,190	3.21	Accepted
3.	Re-integration of inmates back into the society after serving their jail terms	220	100	30	20	370		
	Extent	880	300	60	20	1,260	3.40	Accepted
4.	Identify the existence and causes of anti-social behaviour of inmates	200	100	50	20	370		
	Extent	800	300	100	20	1,220	3.29	Accepted

Criterion Mean = 2.50

Based on the data presentation in table 3, the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command adopted the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration as taking custody of persons legally internal, providing safe, secured and humane custody for inmates, re-integration of inmates back into the society after serving their jail terms and identifying the existence and causes of anti-social behavior of inmates.

Research Question 4: What are the approaches adopted by the Nigerian Correctional Service, Rivers State Command in relating with visitors and their inmates?

Table 1: Approaches adopted by the command in relating with visitors and their inmates

S/N	Respondent's view Items	Nature of Response						
		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL L	MEAN N	DECISION N
1.	The Command offers valuable insight to visitors and the inmates	200	100	50	20	370	3.29	Accepted
	Extent	80	300	100	20	1,220		
2.	The Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command provides first-hand information to visitors to the inmates	180	120	40	30	370	3.21	Accepted
	Extent	720	360	80	30	1,190		
3.	The public relations department of NCS ensures that special given to the request of the visitors to the inmates	220	120	20	20	370	3.51	Accepted
	Extent	880	360	40	20	1,300		

Criterion Mean = 2.50

Therefore, based on the data presented in table 4 above, the approaches adopted by the command in relating with visitors and their inmates are; they offer valuable insights to visitors to the inmates, provides first-hand information to visitors to the inmates and ensure that special attention is given to the request of the visitors and their inmates

Discussion of Findings

Research question 1: What are the channels of communication that are used by the Nigerian Correctional Services Rivers State Command?

The finding of this study shows that the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command used radio, newspapers, television and memos are channels of communication. The founding of this study is in agreement with the Attitude Change Theory which states that the tendency for people to act with different ways of reasoning has the important implication for understanding attitude changes. The finding of this study also collaborates with earlier studies carried out by Nwachukwu (2008) whose study revealed that the institute did not take public relations seriously hence they have crisis that engulfed the institute

Research question two: What are the public relations strategies adopted by command to build favorable public image?

The finding of this study shows that the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command use the following public relations strategy to build a favourable public image which are; news, letters, press release, special events and interview, know your audience

and disseminate the message yourself. The findings of the study is in agreement with the earlier studies carried out by Umelo & Nyemazu (2023) whose study revealed that there is passion from library staff to engage in public relations activities; unfortunately the library needs to improve in their public relations strategies for a successful public relations endeavour. The findings of this study is in agreement with the Principle of the Status Conferral Theory which states that the mass media have the ability to focus so much information from anywhere, at any given time, about any topic, that they can make the topic seems like the most pressing matter.

Research question 3: What are the methods of reformation, rehabilitation and re integration programmes of the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command for the inmates?

The finding of this study shows that the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command applied the following measures such as information, rehabilitation are integration program for each inmate; taking custody of persons legally interned, provided safe, secure and human custody for inmates by identifying the existence and causes of antisocial behaviour of inmates reforms, rehabilitate and finally reintegrate them back to the society. The finding of this study is in agreement with the Attitude Change Theory which states that human beings are both rational and irrational depending on the situation, the motivations operating at the same time.

Research question 4: What are the approaches adopted by the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command in relating with visitors and their inmates?

Findings of the study shows that the Nigerian Correctional Services, Rivers State Command adopted the following approaches in relating with visitors and their inmates; offers valuable insights to the visitors, provide firsthand information and pay attention to their request. The finding of this study collaborates with the principle of status conferral theory which states that press coverage singles out and confers importance upon the person or group covered.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the command used channels of communication such as radio newspapers and television. It applied public relations strategies such as known your audience, disseminate the message yourself, news/press releases, etc, to improve its image. The methods of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of the inmates includes formal education, moral and vocational education, moral and vocational education/counseling and religious activities. However, the approach which is mostly adopted by the command in relating with visitors and their inmates is identifying service problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. The study recommended that it will be ideal for the Nigerian Correctional Services and other correctional centres to adopt and apply effective approaches of relating with visitors and their inmates.
2. The study therefore recommended that there is need for Nigerian Correctional Services to adopt and apply public relations strategies in relating with visitors and their inmates improve its image.

3. The methods of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of the inmates are commendable but should be intensified and more publicized.
4. Also, the study recommended that it is good for the Nigerian Correctional Services and other correctional centres to adopt and apply effective approaches of relating with visitors and their inmates.

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