

## A Critical Assessment of the Regulation of the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Public Relations activities cut-across public and private establishments. This has brought about an increase in the demand for practitioners in this profession. Because of this, people from allied disciplines such as International Relations, Labour Relations, Marketing, Advertising and Journalism have usurped the duties of Public Relations practitioners not even when they have neither been trained nor registered with the statutory body; the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). This work therefore, critically assesses the regulation of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria by Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and further recommended ways of improving the regulation of the practice. Data for this study were obtained through primary sources (questionnaire and interview with officials of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations, Scholars and Practitioners) while the secondary data were obtained through published materials. Findings showed that regulation of the practice of Nigeria Institute of Public Relations in Nigeria is necessary if sanity, discipline and professional excellence are to be attained and maintained. The study also revealed that most practitioners of the profession are not aware of the Institute and its activities. This means effective publicity campaign by the Institute and intensified collective efforts of practitioners must be pursued. Consequently, the researchers sought the advice of Public Relations Practitioners and Scholars on the way forward. Based on this submission, some recommendations on how to properly regulate the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria were advanced.

**Keywords:** Public relations; Regulations; Communication; Nigeria

### Introduction

Public Relations is an important element in both public and private establishments, it is an amalgamation of specialized skills and professions that utilizes a number of approaches and philosophies. Public Relations is not new, rather, with the development of new technologies, new ways of communication and changing public opinion, it is becoming increasingly important in all societies.

The increasing demand for Public Relations practitioners necessitated employers of labour to resort to employing people from allied disciplines such as Journalism, Marketing and Advertising. But because of the technicalities involved in the practice, it cannot be left without appropriate checks in place to monitor practitioners so as to maintain standard. According to Abodunrin [1], a practitioner should respect public interest and the dignity of the individual. Osho [2] is of the view that although there are no statistical data, it is obvious that non-professionals exist in the practice of the profession in Nigeria. This stems from the fact that non professionals lack knowledge, and experience in peculiar practice tradition, relative relational intricacies, legal requirements and circumstances as well as lack of knowledge of the terrain they are operating which is likely to result in lack of contact facilitation procedure [1].

Nkwocha [3] argues that Public Relations has come a long way as it now offers varieties of services which include planning, executing and evaluating impacts of corporate programmes, and Okeke [4] also says global research evidence has shown that effective Public Relations practice requires skills, knowledge and first class interest to promote human learning suitable for organizational needs organizational needs. Sengupta says that to be effective and creative, credible and acceptable Public Relations practice must not exceed the limit of accurate, factual and impartial information. Anything that goes beyond this limit is likely to destroy the practitioner and the organization he represents.

What is then Public Relations? The most elaborate and all embracing definition is that proffered by Rex after a study of 472 definitions of

Public Relations and interview of 83 Public Relations practitioners, who says that Public Relations is the distinctive management function which help to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its public. It also helps management to keep information on public opinion and respond promptly to it. In addition, it defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change while also serving as an early warning system to help management to anticipate trends and utilize research and sound ethical communication technique as its principal tools. Scholars and Practitioners have also defined Public Relations from several perspectives. Nwosu [5], Salu [6], Marston [7], Black [8] and Aboderin [9] agree that Public Relations practice is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling the organization's leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve the public and organization's interest.

From the above, it becomes evident that Public Relations are an image making profession, whereby practitioner's reputation has to be without blemish. This calls for regulation of the practice which is considered to be an indispensable tool for the growth and development of any profession if some form of discipline, efficiency, sanity and professional excellence are to be attained and maintained. Osho [2], Asemah [10] are of the opinion that unskilled practitioners abound

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**Received** October 25, 2012; **Accepted** December 17, 2012; **Published** December 24, 2012

**Citation:** Udomisor IW, Osademe BO (2013) A Critical Assessment of the Regulation of the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria. J Mass Communicat Journalism 3:144. doi:[10.4172/2165-7912.1000144](https://doi.org/10.4172/2165-7912.1000144)

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in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria; their nefarious, illegal and unethical activities are militating against the development of the profession. Also, Osho [2] says that, these people, despite giving the profession a bad image also constitute a setback in the effort to achieve professional excellence.

Therefore, regulation is aimed at controlling, governing or directing by rules, practitioners to the path of professional excellence. This reason prompted the promulgation of Decree No 16 of 1990 by the Babangida regime whose aim was to uplift the standard of the profession, inject respect and probity into the practice by determining standards, skills, and knowledge to be attained.

## Mandate of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations

The fundamental objectives of the Institute are:

- to promote and develop the art and science of Public Relations practice in Nigeria.
- to establish and prescribe high standards of professional and ethical practice, and ensure the observance of this standards.
- to provide facilities, advice and opportunities for executives to meet and discuss Public Relations problems and case studies; thereby, improving the standards of Public Relations practices in Nigeria.
- to encourage the acquisition of professional qualifications in Public Relations through the provision of examinations and facilities.
- to conduct research, collect and disseminate information on all aspects of Public Relations.
- to publish journals, books and provide guidelines for the regulation of the practice.

## Statement of the problem

There are various provisions of Decree No. 16 of 1990 and by-laws made by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations. Despite the existence of these legal provisions, a lot of problems persist. These problems range from unethical conducts, lack of adequate awareness on the code of the profession and the functions of the Institute among others. This study therefore, critically assesses the problems associated with regulating the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria.

## Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim and objective of this study was to critically assess the regulation of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria and recommend ways that will enhance a proper and better regulation of the practice.

## Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

- to critically assess the practices of Public Relations in Nigeria.
- examine the essence and problems of regulating Public Relations Practice.
- ascertain the effectiveness of a regulatory strategy suitable for the institute.

## Significance of the study

- It will no doubt add to existing literature on the subject matter and update knowledge in this area.
- It will for many years to come, remain an invaluable reference

work for scholars, students, practitioners and others interested in knowing about the activities of the NIPR and how the Institute regulates the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria.

## Scope of the study

This study is concerned with a critical assessment of the regulation of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria. The study covered the period of 1990 when the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations was formally established by virtue of Decree No. 16 of 1990 and limited to practitioners, scholars and officials of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations in one state; each from the six (6) geo-political zones of the country.

## Literature Review

Today, Public Relations has grown rapidly as a professional area with specialized Public Relations associations making the practice more complex and skill demanding [11]. To buttress this view, Okeke [9] says, that global research evidence shows that effective Public Relations practice requires skills, knowledge and first class interest to promote human learning suitable for organizational needs. Some scholars believe that the profession of Public Relations has become a potent force in government, commerce, industry, political and private life. They also believe that there is hardly any other calling that permeates all spheres of life and human endeavours as Public Relations [3].

Public Relations is a very powerful communication force as well as vital marketing tool that helps commercial and non commercial organizations to sell goods, services, images, credibility and ideas through channel of information. In effect, checks and control are indispensable to curtail the activities of bad practitioners. Asemah [10] says that NIPR as the umbrella organization of Public Relations Practitioners in Nigeria must see to it that there is effective control and supervision of activities of Public Relations Practitioners in the country so as to maintain standard and sanity in the profession. He lamented that the institute which is supposed to lead the drive does not have adequate mechanism to do so.

Before the promulgation of Decree No 16 of 1990, there were no statutory and constitutional provisions in the country that recognized the practice of Public Relations as a distinctive professional activity and no provisions existed that detailed the rights, obligations and duties of practitioners. So, the establishment of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations was predicated on the phenomenal increase in both Public Relations offices as well as practitioners. With this development, it became necessary that a professional body to oversee the activities and functions of professionals be established. This effort, from inception, gained nationwide recognition and acceptance.

Muhammed [12], is of the view that the Public Relations Practitioners Decree No. 16 of 1990 remains a landmark in an effort to regulate the practice of Public Relations in Nigerian. Apart from providing the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations with the desired and enhanced legal status, the decree set the tone for self perpetuation, recognition and relevance. In essence, the decree empowered the Institute to formulate policies and programmes calculated at sanitizing Public Relations practice.

The Nigerian Institute of Public relation is a nation-wide professional and fraternal organization which is supposed to serve as a catalyst in the continuing development of the highest possible standards in Public Relations education, ethics, practice and performance. Through its publications and efforts of its state chapters, attempt are intensified and

geared towards furthering knowledge and understanding of different professional techniques and styles.

Literature review for this study benefits from Public Relations Institutes across the globe among other write-ups. They include, International Public Relations Association (IPRA), Institute of Public Relations (IPR) and the Code of Athens. They all are vital and serve as instruments in regulating the practice of Public Relations in all societies.

However, it must be pointed that the review of literature for this study has revealed that there are not yet enough published research works that are based on the regulation of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria; although related published and unpublished works on Public Relations generally exist. This makes the study necessary and inevitable.

In support of this position, Oyekan [13], a one-time president of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations said that one problem that gives the profession sleepless nights and nightmares is the abject lack of authentic, contemporary, current and regular publications to spread the new knowledge and findings in Public Relations.

Ajala [14] observes that in any image making profession, laws and ethics are designed to curb excesses in practitioners' behaviours. Since Public Relations is a management job with reputation it has to be without blemish as the Job involves preserving and building goodwill for the organization. The Institute therefore should developed ethical code and continuously adopt bye-laws to guide members' behaviour since practitioners can only be measured by their ethical performance.

Institutes of Public Relations have code of conduct for their members, and as put by Black [15], the essential principle in International Public Relations is to think globally but act locally. These professional codes of conduct are to guide the behaviors and conduct of practitioners. Adamolekun and Ekundayo [16] are of the view that all codes, including that of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations sprang from the same principles that were enunciated by the Institute of Public Relations in Britain and the Codes of Athens.

Below is presented a summary of the headings of the Codes of Conduct of the various Institutes reviewed. The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) formed in the United Kingdom in 1948, whose Code of Conduct was first adopted in 1963 but reviewed in 1985 and adopted in 1986 states:

- Standard of professional conduct.
- Media of communication.
- Undisclosed interest and rewards to holder of public office.
- Conflict Interest and upholding the code.
- Reputation of the profession and injury to members of other professions as well as professional updating.

The concept of International Public Relations Association (IPRA) came into being in 1949 but was formally established in 1955. The objective was to develop an idea of organizing Public Relations practitioners into a para-national society which will raise the standard of the practice in various countries and improve the professional and fraternal standard of Public Relations. This would serve as a catalyst in the continuing development of the highest possible standard of Public Relations education, ethnics, practices and performance. Although its Code of Conduct was adopted in 1961, it was only later that the

association adopted the Code of Athens which is regarded as a moral charter based upon the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNUDHR).

The code of professional conduct as adopted by the International Public Relations Association, Institute of Public Relations and Code of Athens serves as input to the code of professional conduct of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations which was formulated much later. In effect, the code of professional practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is alien to our culture and environment and a repetition of those of the Institutes in Britain, America and the Code of Athens.

As observed by Osho [2], the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations code of professional conduct bye-law No. 1 of 1992 is a total lifting of that of the Institute of Public Relations Association. It is foreign, utopian and does not have consideration for our peculiar situation in Nigeria. Nnaemeka in Adamolekun and Ekundayo is of the view that in ethical regulation of the practice of Public Relations, the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) code of conduct are largely a reproduction in superficially revised terms of the code of professional conduct of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR). He argued further that the code is ineffective because it did not emphasize the public interest which it ought to protect.

Equally, Adamolekun and Ekundayo [16] are of the view that the Institute failed to properly situate the code within the existing Nigerian Constitution. The Editorial of Corporate Mirror, vol. 1, No.6 (2001:5) is of the view that Decree No. 16 of 1990 only prescribed an existence rather than giving a full impetus to an organization that would have helped in structuring the image of the government and at the same time sustains goodwill between the government and the people. Further, it argued that such bodies in other countries like the Institute of Public Relations in Britain plays a major role in counseling leaders of thought by prescribing preventive measures for the image sustenance of the government. But the same cannot be said of the Nigerian body. Therefore, it suggested the urgent need for the amendment of schedule 4 (10) (1) c of the decree.

Udoh, a one-time National Vice-President of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations in Communication Strategies, Vol. 1 No.3 (1999) describes the Nigerian Institute of Public Relation decree No.16 of 1990 as a mere sheet of paper and the law as a toothless bulldog being flouted with reckless abandon.

The evolution of the control measures in Public Relations could be traced back to past World War era. During this period Public Relations achieved great successes which led to the abuse of moral values and societal norms. Nnaemeka [17] observed that ethical concern is important in all occupations and indeed in all man's conduct and actions. Concern for ethics goes beyond respect for the law and considerations for the rights of the individual in the pursuit of ones vocation or calling. It involves commitment to virtues, totality to truth, justice, ultimate good and temperance.

Although, the regulation of ethical practice of Public Relations in Nigeria is through code of conduct, they should never be static; rather they should undergo revisions to meet the dynamism of the society. Nnaemeka puts it this way, "the parameter for the revision of these codes and improvement in standard of practice must originate from peculiarities of the needs and concern of the society at each phase of its structural development."

Professional code of conduct is to guide the behavior and conduct of practitioners, but they must be rooted in the values that are inherent



and structural along the society in which the concerned profession exists. A negation of this means denying the code and the practice continuous social support for sustenance, growth and development.

According to Osho [2], the regulation of the practice of Public Relations was predicated on the abuse of the ethics of the profession by some practitioners.

Other reasons were;

- the illegal ways by which practitioners practice the profession.
- lack of social responsibilities to social norms and values in the production of products and services.
- the engineering of illusions through communication skills of Advertising and Public Relations practitioners rather than promoting the quality of content and the substance of products and services.

It is assumed that professional ethics and codes are often consistent with normative and moral orientation of the society in which they operate; either through laws socially administered and enforced or through self administered and self enforced codes designed to guide a profession as a recognized and legitimate field in the society.

The Nigerian Institution of Public Relations adopted the personally administered and self enforced techniques to regulate its practice predicated on the sanctity of individual to lead a life that is in conformity with the normative structure of the social system.

Without the necessary authority and the organizational structure to impose sanctions for infringement and elicit compliances from members, codes of professional practice in Nigeria will remain mere expressions of philosophy. In Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, the enforcement of professional code of conduct is left with the Institute via a disciplinary committee.

## Theoretical Framework

This research has as its theoretical framework the two-way symmetric models proposed by Grunting. This model was considered appropriate because it emphasized a two-way flow of communication between organizations and their various publics with a view to ensuring mutual understanding, cooperation, acceptance, goodwill and rapport.

Again, it encouraged the attitude of self-belonging, commitment, collectivity and neutrality as it gives room for dialogue, negotiation and feedback. Ubani [18]. Put the model thus: Source 1.

This model explains the functions and practice of Public Relations which entails harmonious working relationship with its publics, collectivity, neutrality and objectivity, since the cardinal principles of the practice are predicated on truth, honesty and accuracy.

Model	Purpose	Nature of Communication	Communication model
Press Agency and Publicity	Propaganda	One way, complete truth not necessary	From source to receiver.
Public Information	Dissemination of information	One way, complete truth is necessary	From source to receiver
Two way Symmetric	Scientific/ Systematic persuasion	Two way balance effect	From source to receiver and vice versa.
Two way symmetric	Mutual understanding and goodwill	Two way balance effect	From source to receiver and vice-versa

**Source 1:** Grunting and hunt Adopted from Ubani (1996).

## Methodology

Survey research method was used in. this study because of its reliability and versatility. The data were obtained from two major sources, primary sources that involved (questionnaire and oral interview) and secondary source which included documentary research which included Journals, Library materials and publications of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations.

The justification to use oral interview was predicated on the fact that it did not only reinforce the questionnaire, but it also gave the researcher opportunities to phrase and rephrase the questions to tally with the purpose intended, this is because this instrument is not rigid but open to changes. The techniques also allowed for proper explanation and justification of answers. Since the interviewee and interviewer were privileged to ask for clarifications where ambiguity or vagueness existed. Finally, the interviewer was in a position to examine emotions, beliefs, and attitude that could not be observed in written communication.

## Sample size

Since it was impossible to study the whole officials of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations both at the National Headquarters and at its various state chapters; and scholars and practitioners of the profession all over the country, samples were therefore drawn. The essence of sampling is to obtain data on a subset of some population so that inferences could be made about the population based on the data of the samples.

The purposive, cluster and simple random sampling method were used in this study. The rationale underlying cluster method is that it is used in large scale descriptive studies involving target population with geographically dispersed sampling units.

## Research population

The data collected were limited to one state from each of the six (6) geopolitical zones of the country, with Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and Lagos State as additional because of their strategic importance as the capital of Nigeria and the commercial nerve centre of the country and headquarters of the Nigerian Institution of Public Relations respectively

Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to staff of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations both at the National and State chapters from each of the six (6) geo-political zones in the country. From the questionnaires distributed, twenty-three (23) were returned which formed the number analyzed. The difficulty faced included that some of the state chapters do not have secretariat and functional offices where the activities of the Institute could be conducted. However, each zone had representation in the collation.

The distribution of questionnaires to other Public Relations practitioners and scholars cut-across public and private establishments. Twenty (20) questionnaires were distributed in the state representing each zone and additional twenty (20) each in Abuja and Lagos states because of their strategic importance. At collation one hundred and thirty nine questionnaires were returned these formed the number analyzed (Table 1).

It must be pointed out that by NIPR laws a state chapter is entitled to eight (8) official Members and four (4) non-official members.

## Structuring the instrument and pretesting

To ensure the validity of the instrument a pilot study was

Geo- Political Zones	State	Questionnaire to staff of NIPR		Questionnaires to scholars and Practitioners	
		Number Distributed	Number Returned	No. Distributed	No. Returned
South West	Lagos	5	4	20	17
	Ogun	5	2	20	15
South East	Anambra	5	2	20	18
South-South	Bayelsa	5	1	20	18
North East	Borno	5	1	2200	17
North West	Kebbi	5	1	20	17
North Central	Kogi	5	3	20	19
FCT	Abuja	5	3	20	18
National Headquarters'		10	6		
TOTAL		50	23	160	139

**Table 1:** Guide to the field work.

Re-sponses	N.H	S. Lagos	W. Ogun	S.E Anambra	S.S Bayelsa	N.E Borno	N.C Kogi	N.W. Kebbi	FCT Abuja	T/F	%
Yes	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	13.0
No	4	2	3	2	1	1	3	1	3	20	87
Total	6	2	4	2	1	1	3	1	3	23	100

**Table 2:** Source: Field Data, 2003.

undertaken. The purpose was to test how the instrument would work and be modified for effectiveness. And to establish the reliability of the instruments, the test-re-test technique was used. This technique is a process whereby the same task is given to the same people on more than one occasion and then each person's performance on both test was compared whereby the score obtained on the first administration of the test is related to the second administration of each person to provide reliability co-efficient

In essence, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the same reliability group more than once to discover how consistent each element in the group could score the instrument at different times. The outcome of this exercise indicated a high degree of consistency in their responses which made the instrument of data collection reliable. However, it must be stated that the questionnaires and interviews for both pilot study and research proper reflected the issues under investigation.

## Statistical analysis

The analysis was done through simple statistics tabulation whereby the degrees of percentage of responses to the question were measured where the number of (yes) and number of (No) responses summed up to 100%.

$$\text{Sample Percentages} = \frac{\text{TotalNo. of Responses (Yes or No)} \times 100}{\text{TotalNo of Respondents}}$$

## Responses to questionnaires by officials of the Nigerian institute of public relations (national and state chapters)

Question 1:- Is the Institute equipped with the facilities of regulating the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria (Table 2).

Staffs were asked if the Institute had the necessary facilities that could enable it regulate the practice of PR properly in Nigeria; such facilities Include offices, computer machines and manpower. While twenty (20) that is 87% of respondents stated that the Institute lacked the necessary equipment, three (3) represent 13% were of the opinion

that equipments exist in the Institute.

## Responses to questionnaire by practitioners and scholars of public relations profession

QUESTION 1: Are you aware of the existence of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations and its activities? Table 3

Majority of practitioners and scholars do not have any form of knowledge about the existence of NIPR. While 36.4% affirmed yes to the existence of NIPR and its activities, 63.6% are of the contrary opinion. An explanation that could be offered is anchored on the type of Public Relations Strategy employed by the institute to create awareness. Suggestions such as annual retreat, workshops, and conferences by officials of the Institute both at the national and state chapters should be intensified.

## Test of hypothesis

This hypothesis is tested with the Chi-square test of independence and applied at 0.05% level of significance. The essence is to know whether to reject or accept the hypothesis formulated.

$$\text{The formula for computing chi-square } (x^2) = \frac{(oj - ej)}{ej}$$

Where:

oj =observed frequencies

ej=expected frequencies

xc<sup>2</sup>= expected chi-square

x<sub>o</sub><sup>2</sup>=computed chi-square

n=number of observed or expected frequencies

df=degree of freedom (n-1)

H<sub>0</sub>: practitioners of Public Relations in Nigeria are not aware of the existence of the Institute's decree and code of professional conduct.

H<sub>1</sub>: practitioners of PR in Nigeria are aware of the existence of the Institute's decree and code of professional conduct.

The purpose of this hypothesis is to test the level of awareness of the Institute's degree and its various bye-laws. Responses given by practitioners are presented in the contingency table below.

Item: Are you aware of the existence of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations and its activities?

Table 4: Source: Field Data, 2003

Chi-Square is applied! at 0.05 level of significance. Let x=0.05

$$D.F=(r-1) (c-1)$$

$$=(8-1) (2-1)$$

$$=7 \times 1 = 7$$

Therefore, the critical value=14.067.

To compute the expected,

$$\text{Formula} = \frac{(\text{rowtotal}) (\text{column total})}{\text{Samplesize}}$$

Table 5: Observed and Expected frequencies of sample Results

$$\text{Formula } x^2 = (oj - ej)^2$$

Response	S. Lagos	W. Ogun	SE. Anambra	SS. Bayesa	N.E. Borno	N.E Kogi	N.W Kebbi	FCT Abuja	T/F	%	
Yes	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	13.0
No	4	2	3	2	1	1	3	1	3	20	87
Total	6	2	4	2	1	1	3	1	3	23	100

**Table 3:** Source: Field data, 2003.

Response	S. Lagos	W. Ogun	SE. Anambra	SS. Bayesa	N.E. Borno	N.E Kogi	N.W Kebbi	FCT Abuja	T/F	%	
Yes	9	7	7	5	3	7	7	5	51	36.7	
No	8	8	11	13	14	10	12	13	88	63.3	
Total	17	15	18	18	17	17	19	18	139	100	

**Table 4:** Source: Field Data, 2003.

Response	S. Lagos	W. Ogun	SE. Anambra	SS. Bayesa	N.E. Borno	N.E Kogi	N.W Kebbi	FCT Abuja	T/F	%	
Yes	9(6.24)	7(5.50)	7(6.60)	5(6.60)	3(6.24)	7(6.24)	7(6.97)	5(6.97)	51	36.7	
No	8(10.8)	8(9.50)	11(11.40)	11(11.40)	14(10.8)	10(10.8)	12(12.03)	13(12.03)	88	63.3	
Total	17	15	18	18	17	17	19	18	139	100	

**Table 5:** Observed and Expected frequencies of sample Results.

$$X_i = \frac{(9 - 6.24)^2}{6.24} + \frac{(7 - 5.50)^2}{5.50} + \frac{(7 - 6.60)^2}{6.60} + \frac{(5 - 6.60)^2}{6.60} + \frac{(3 - 6.24)^2}{6.24} + \frac{(7 - 6.24)^2}{6.24} + \frac{(7 - 6.97)^2}{6.97} + \frac{(6 - 6.97)^2}{6.97}$$

$$= 1.22 + 0.41 + 0.02 + 0.39 + 1.68 + 0.09 + 0.00 + 0.13 = 3.94$$

$$X_{ii} = \frac{(8 - 10.8)^2}{10.8} + \frac{(8 - 9.50)^2}{9.50} + \frac{(11 - 11.40)^2}{11.40} + \frac{(13 - 11.40)^2}{11.40} + \frac{(14 - 10.8)^2}{10.8} + \frac{(10 - 10.8)^2}{10.8} + \frac{(12 - 12.03)^2}{12.03} + \frac{(13 - 12.03)^2}{12.03}$$

$$= 0.73 + 0.24 + 0.01 + 0.22 + 0.95 + 0.06 + 0.00 + 0.09 = 2.30$$

Therefore,  $3.94 + 2.30 = 6.24$ .

Therefore,  $6.24 < 14.067$

Decision: Since the computed value  $\chi^2$  (6.24) is less than the critical value 14.067, we therefore, accept the null hypothesis and conclude that practitioners of Public Relations in Nigeria are not aware of the existence of the Institutes decree and code of professional conduct.

## Summary and Major Findings

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations metamorphosed from Public Relations Association of Nigeria in 1972. Statutory power known as Public Relations Practitioners Decree No. 16 of 1990 came into being under General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd) regime. This decree empowers the Institute to sanitize and standardize the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria.

The institute had made three bye-laws, bye-law No. 1 of 1992 which is referred to as the code of professional conduct, bye-law No. 2 of 1992 which sees to the creation and administration of state chapters, and bye-law No. 3 of 1993 which focuses on Public Relations consultancy practice in Nigeria.

The Institute has a governing council, empowered by Decree No.16 of 1999; the council as the governing body takes full charge of administration and enforcement of the provisions of the decree on subjects as funding, appointment of Registrar, registrars of members

and the establishment of investigating panel and disciplinary tribunal. The Institute as at now has reestablished state chapters all over the Federation including Abuja. Although, some of the state chapters do not have functional secretariats, this no doubt affects the smooth running of the Institute activities. But the National Headquarters is still located in Lagos.

The Nigeria Institute of Public Relations has successfully conducted examinations for aspiring professional Public Relations Practitioners and held induction exercises as well. This success has earned the Institute's certificate and diploma recognition by ministry of education that this certificate and diploma are equal to an Ordinary National Diploma and first degree respectively. Again former Head of State General Babaginda (rtd) and Olusegun Osoba and Buba Marwa former governors of Ogun and Lagos States have been inducted as Honorary Fellows and Life Patrons of the Institute.

The Institute engages in research and publication of journals both at the national headquarters and at the state chapters. Examples are the Biannual Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Public Relations yesterday and today and the Image maker by Ogun state chapter of the Institute.

## Conclusion

Regulation of the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria has become inevitable if discipline, sanity and professional excellence are to be achieved and maintained due to the increasing demand of professional practitioners by private and public establishment.

As put by Schroder Joachim during Sam Epelle memorial gold lecture, "the number of instant professionals lacking ethical and moral competence is rapidly increasing among communication discipline". And Osho [2] observed that unskilled practitioners abound in the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria that their nefarious, illegal and unethical activities are militating against the development of the profession. These people despite giving the profession a bad image also constitute setback in the drive to achieve professional excellence.

Ajala [14] had argued that, in image making profession laws and ethics are designed to curb excesses in practitioners behaviors of which Public Relations is not an exemption. And Udoh, one time Vice

President of the Institute had described NIPR Decree as a mere sheet of paper and the law as a toothless bulldog being flouted with reckless abandon.

Therefore, the institute has become a practical necessity; the decree empowering it has to be revisited with necessary amendment made to give force to it. Awareness has to be created to solicit support and co-operation from practitioners, and anyone found flouting the decree should be punished as stipulated.

## Recommendations

To ensure effective regulation of the practice of Public Relations based on the finding of this research, the following recommendations are put forward:

- The Nigerian institute of Public Relations has to reposition itself to meet the challenges before it' by addressing the question of professional ethics often clashing with expediency in the practice of the profession.
- A re-visit to the code should be made via studying the codes of Public Relations Association in other parts of the world and ethical rules of major professions practicing in Nigeria.
- Definition should be included in the sections of the codes to provide guidance as to the extent with which certain words and phrase are used thus avoiding ambiguities.
- The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations must publicize its codes because knowledge that they exist even though they are not always observed undoubtedly strengthens the profession in public view.
- The remedy lies not just in distributing the copies of the code 'of conduct, but in a deeper understanding among practitioners of the essential meaning of the rules, their background and the purpose for which they were adopted either through organization of lectures, workshops, seminars or Symposium.
- Also, there is need for the Institute to harmonize all training programs by making input, approval and supervising training programs at the level of preparing guidelines, syllabuses and manuals so as to ascertain their content, quality, scope and as well ensure very high standard.
- Furthermore, courses in ethical conduct and new development in Public Relations should be made available. The Institute should, as a matter of urgency, introduce Mandatory Education Programmed (MEP) for all categories of its members which should cover areas in research, publication, and creative contributions to the profession; this is to erode the exemption of old practitioners from new educational requirements.
- The Institute should revoke the right to practice of anyone found and proven wanting. Also, the practitioner's name and offence should be gazette and his or her state chapter informed. NIPR should act as "clearing house" to employers of the profession by vetting certificates and other credentials for employers of this profession.
- All state chapters should be equipped with the necessary working tools so as to function properly.

- The attention of current constitution review committee should be drawn to the establishing decree, to redefine its scope and give to it more constitutional backing to serve its purpose.

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