



Effectiveness of Government Public Relations in Promoting the *People's Charter of Needs* Agenda of the Ebonyi State Government under Governor Francis Nwifuru

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ABSTRACT

Background: Public relations is a strategic management function that facilitates effective communication between government and citizens, promotes public understanding of policies, and enhances civic participation in governance. In Ebonyi State, the implementation of Governor Francis Nwifuru's *People's Charter of Needs* agenda has relied considerably on government public relations to communicate policy objectives, mobilise public support, and foster citizen engagement. However, the effectiveness of these public relations efforts in promoting awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the agenda among the people remains an important empirical issue.

Objectives: The study examined the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the *People's Charter of Needs* agenda of the Ebonyi State Government. Specifically, it assessed the roles of media relations, public education, advocacy, and feedback mechanisms in enhancing citizens' awareness, understanding, and support for the government's development agenda.

Methods: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire administered to **350 respondents** selected from different demographic groups across Ebonyi State. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentages.

Results: The findings revealed that government public relations significantly enhanced public awareness and understanding of the *People's Charter of Needs* agenda. Respondents generally perceived media relations, public education campaigns, advocacy programmes, and feedback mechanisms as effective strategies for communicating government policies and encouraging public support. Nevertheless, the findings also indicated the need for greater inclusiveness, stronger citizen participation, and more responsive communication channels to improve policy acceptance and stakeholder engagement.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to public relations scholarship by providing empirical evidence on the role of government public relations in promoting policy communication and citizen engagement at the sub-national level in Nigeria. It demonstrates how strategic public relations can



strengthen government–citizen relationships and facilitate the successful implementation of development-oriented policy initiatives.

Conclusion: Government public relations plays a pivotal role in promoting the *People's Charter of Needs* agenda by enhancing public awareness, improving policy understanding, and fostering citizen participation in governance. However, sustained stakeholder engagement and participatory communication remain essential for strengthening public trust and achieving broader policy acceptance.

Key Recommendation: The study recommends that the Ebonyi State Government should institutionalise more participatory and two-way public relations strategies by strengthening community engagement, expanding digital communication platforms, enhancing media outreach, and establishing robust feedback and evaluation mechanisms to improve public confidence and ensure the effective implementation of the *People's Charter of Needs* agenda.

Keywords: Government Public Relations, People's Charter of Needs, Policy Communication, Public Education, Citizen Engagement, Ebonyi State.

INTRODUCTION

Government public relations has become an indispensable component of democratic governance because it facilitates communication between governments and citizens, promotes transparency, strengthens public trust, and enhances participation in public policy implementation. Beyond disseminating information, contemporary government public relations serves as a strategic management function that builds mutual understanding, encourages stakeholder engagement, manages public expectations, and legitimises government actions through continuous dialogue with diverse publics. In democratic societies, the effectiveness of government programmes depends not only on policy formulation and implementation but also on how successfully such policies are communicated, understood, and accepted by the citizenry. Consequently, governments increasingly rely on strategic public relations to generate awareness, shape public opinion, mobilise support, and foster civic participation in development initiatives.

Effective government communication is particularly critical in developing democracies where policy implementation is often constrained by inadequate public awareness, misinformation, political distrust, and weak citizen participation. Public relations provides governments with structured communication mechanisms through which policy objectives, implementation strategies, expected outcomes, and citizens' responsibilities are communicated to the public in a timely, credible, and accessible manner. Through media relations, public enlightenment campaigns, stakeholder engagement, community outreach, digital communication, and feedback systems, government public relations contributes to improving policy legitimacy while promoting accountability and participatory governance.

In Ebonyi State, the administration of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru introduced the **People's Charter of Needs** as its overarching development blueprint. The agenda articulates the government's commitment to improving citizens' welfare through interventions in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure development, industrialisation, youth empowerment, security, human capital development, and economic transformation. Since assuming office, the administration has consistently presented government programmes, projects, and policy initiatives within the framework of the People's Charter of Needs, making it the principal policy



identity of the government. Consequently, the effectiveness of government public relations in communicating the philosophy, objectives, and achievements of the Charter has become central to citizens' awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the administration's development agenda.

Although the existence of a clearly articulated policy framework provides strategic direction for governance, policy success depends substantially on effective communication between government institutions and the people they serve. Public administration scholars have consistently argued that development policies achieve greater acceptance when governments employ participatory communication strategies that provide accurate information, encourage public dialogue, address misconceptions, and create opportunities for citizens' feedback. Conversely, inadequate communication often results in poor public understanding, misinformation, weak stakeholder participation, and limited ownership of government programmes. Thus, public relations should not merely publicise government activities but should facilitate continuous interaction that enables citizens to understand, evaluate, and contribute to policy implementation.

Among the numerous functions of government public relations, media relations remains one of the most influential communication strategies. Through press briefings, news releases, media interviews, feature stories, documentaries, official websites, and digital media platforms, governments disseminate policy information to broad audiences. Effective media relations enhance the visibility of government programmes and improve public understanding by ensuring that information is accurate, timely, credible, and consistent. However, communication scholars have observed that media visibility alone does not necessarily translate into public understanding or behavioural support. The effectiveness of media relations depends largely on institutional credibility, message consistency, transparency, and the perceived trustworthiness of government communicators. In many developing democracies, including Nigeria, government communication has frequently been criticised for emphasising publicity over dialogue, thereby limiting opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement.

Closely related to media relations are public education and advocacy, which constitute essential components of strategic government communication. Public education involves systematic efforts to improve citizens' knowledge and understanding of government policies, while advocacy seeks to encourage public participation, ownership, and behavioural support for developmental initiatives. Unlike routine publicity, public education requires sustained communication through community engagement, sensitisation programmes, town hall meetings, interpersonal communication, social mobilisation, and strategic use of both traditional and digital media. Such communication enables citizens not only to receive information but also to appreciate the rationale, benefits, and implications of public policies.

Equally important are feedback and evaluation mechanisms, which represent the dialogic dimension of government public relations. Contemporary public relations theory recognises communication as a reciprocal process rather than a one-way transmission of information.



Effective governments therefore establish communication channels that enable citizens to express concerns, evaluate government performance, provide suggestions, and participate in decision-making processes. Feedback systems enhance organisational learning, improve policy implementation, strengthen accountability, and foster mutual trust between government institutions and the public. Where such mechanisms are weak or absent, governments risk implementing policies that fail to reflect citizens' expectations and developmental priorities.

Despite increasing investments in government communication across Nigeria, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting state-level development agendas remains relatively limited. Existing studies have predominantly examined political communication, electioneering campaigns, image management, and media coverage of government activities, with comparatively little attention devoted to evaluating how strategic public relations contributes to citizens' awareness, understanding, and acceptance of comprehensive policy frameworks such as the People's Charter of Needs. This gap is particularly evident in Ebonyi State, where the Charter constitutes the central policy framework guiding governmental activities.

Against this background, this study evaluates the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government under Governor Francis Nwifuru. Specifically, the study examines the contributions of media relations, public education and advocacy, and feedback and evaluation mechanisms in enhancing citizens' awareness, understanding, and support for the government's developmental agenda. By providing empirical evidence from Ebonyi State, the study contributes to the growing literature on government public relations, strategic communication, and public policy implementation in emerging democracies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Strategic public relations has become increasingly important in contemporary governance because effective policy implementation depends not only on the formulation of development programmes but also on citizens' awareness, understanding, participation, and support. Governments therefore invest substantial resources in public communication to ensure that policy objectives are clearly understood and that stakeholders actively participate in development initiatives. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of government public relations in translating policy intentions into public understanding remains a persistent concern, particularly within developing democracies where institutional communication is frequently challenged by misinformation, political scepticism, limited stakeholder engagement, and inadequate feedback mechanisms.

Since assuming office, the Ebonyi State Government has consistently presented the People's Charter of Needs as the framework underpinning its development policies and programmes. Through media campaigns, public enlightenment initiatives, stakeholder engagements, official publications, and digital communication platforms, the government has sought to communicate the objectives and achievements of the Charter to citizens across the state. Despite these



communication efforts, it remains unclear whether government public relations has effectively enhanced citizens' awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the policy agenda. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while government activities receive considerable publicity, there are varying levels of public knowledge, differing interpretations of policy objectives, and concerns regarding the adequacy of citizen engagement in policy communication.

Furthermore, although media relations, public education, advocacy, and feedback mechanisms constitute core elements of government public relations, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the extent to which these communication strategies have contributed to promoting the People's Charter of Needs within Ebonyi State. Existing studies on government communication in Nigeria have focused largely on political campaigns, media performance, and image management, leaving a noticeable gap in understanding the effectiveness of strategic public relations in facilitating policy communication and citizen engagement at the sub-national level.

It is this empirical gap that necessitates the present study. Specifically, the study evaluates the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government under Governor Francis Nwifuru by examining the roles of media relations, public education and advocacy, and feedback and evaluation mechanisms in enhancing citizens' awareness, understanding, and support for the government's developmental agenda.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government under Governor Francis Nwifuru.

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the effectiveness of media relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government;
2. assess the effectiveness of public education and advocacy in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda;
3. evaluate the effectiveness of feedback and evaluation mechanisms in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are media relations effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government?
2. To what extent are public education and advocacy effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda?



3. To what extent are feedback and evaluation mechanisms effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Public Education and Advocacy

Public education and advocacy constitute integral components of strategic government public relations because they facilitate the transmission of policy information, promote civic awareness, and encourage citizens' participation in governance. Within the public relations literature, public education is conceptualised as a systematic communication process through which government institutions provide citizens with accurate, timely, and relevant information necessary for understanding public policies and programmes. Advocacy, on the other hand, extends beyond information dissemination by seeking to influence public attitudes, mobilise support, and encourage behavioural responses that contribute to the successful implementation of policy initiatives (Servaes, 2008; McQuail, 2010). Although conceptually distinct, the two functions are mutually reinforcing, as public education establishes the knowledge base upon which advocacy builds public commitment and participation.

Contemporary public relations scholarship increasingly recognises that effective public education and advocacy require participatory rather than purely informational communication approaches. Traditional government communication largely relied on one-way information dissemination in which citizens were viewed as passive recipients of official messages. However, developments in strategic communication and development communication have shifted attention towards dialogue-based models that encourage interaction, feedback, and stakeholder participation. Servaes (2008) argues that participatory communication empowers citizens by allowing them to become active contributors to development processes rather than mere audiences of government information. This perspective aligns with contemporary public relations practice, which regards communication as a reciprocal process through which governments not only inform citizens but also respond to their concerns and incorporate public opinion into policy implementation.

Within the Nigerian context, however, several scholars have observed that public education and advocacy programmes continue to exhibit characteristics of top-down communication, where government institutions emphasise publicity and image management at the expense of meaningful public engagement (Edegoh & Asemah, 2013; Asemah, Nwammuo, & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). Such communication practices often achieve visibility without necessarily improving public understanding or encouraging sustained citizen participation. Campaigns frequently concentrate on announcing government activities while paying limited attention to audience segmentation, cultural diversity, message adaptation, and mechanisms for evaluating communication effectiveness. Consequently, citizens may become aware of government



programmes without fully understanding their objectives, implementation strategies, or expected benefits.

The effectiveness of public education and advocacy is therefore influenced by several interrelated communication variables. Kotler and Lee (2007) observe that successful public communication requires careful audience segmentation, strategic message design, appropriate media selection, and continuous evaluation of communication outcomes. Similarly, McQuail (2010) argues that communication effectiveness should not be assessed solely by message exposure but by demonstrable changes in public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. Development communication scholars further maintain that communication campaigns produce greater impact when messages reflect local cultural realities, employ trusted community communication channels, and provide opportunities for dialogue between government institutions and citizens (Servaes, 2008). Such approaches increase message credibility, strengthen public trust, and encourage policy ownership.

Within the framework of the People's Charter of Needs, public education and advocacy perform the critical function of translating government development priorities into messages that citizens can understand, appreciate, and support. The Charter encompasses multiple policy sectors, including education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, industrialisation, youth empowerment, and economic development, each requiring sustained communication to ensure public understanding and participation. Consequently, the effectiveness of public education and advocacy cannot be determined merely by the frequency of campaigns or the volume of publicity generated. Rather, effectiveness should be evaluated in terms of citizens' awareness of the Charter, their understanding of its objectives, their confidence in government communication, and their willingness to participate in programmes designed to achieve the Charter's developmental goals.

Accordingly, this study conceptualises public education and advocacy as strategic communication processes through which the Ebonyi State Government seeks to enhance public knowledge, promote favourable attitudes, stimulate civic participation, and strengthen public ownership of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. Their effectiveness is therefore measured by the extent to which government communication contributes to awareness, understanding, acceptance, and citizen engagement.

Promotion of the People's Charter of Needs Agenda

The promotion of public policy constitutes one of the central responsibilities of government public relations because policy implementation depends substantially on citizens' awareness, understanding, acceptance, and participation. In contemporary governance, policy promotion extends beyond publicity or information dissemination to encompass a strategic communication process through which governments explain policy objectives, demonstrate relevance, encourage stakeholder support, and sustain public confidence throughout implementation. Kotler and Lee (2007) describe policy promotion as a planned communication effort designed to influence



public understanding and behaviour in ways that facilitate the achievement of governmental objectives. Within this perspective, promotion is viewed not as an isolated communication activity but as a continuous process of relationship building between government institutions and citizens.

The People's Charter of Needs represents the principal development framework of the current Ebonyi State Government and serves as the foundation upon which government programmes, projects, and policy initiatives are communicated. As a comprehensive policy agenda covering education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, industrialisation, security, human capital development, and economic empowerment, its successful implementation depends considerably on effective communication strategies capable of translating policy intentions into public understanding. Government public relations therefore assumes a strategic role in ensuring that the Charter is not merely recognised as a political manifesto but understood as a practical framework for socio-economic development.

Strategic communication scholars emphasise that effective policy promotion requires much more than media visibility. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that public relations achieves its greatest effectiveness when communication is based on dialogue, transparency, credibility, and mutual understanding rather than persuasion alone. Their Excellence Theory maintains that organisations strengthen stakeholder relationships by establishing two-way communication systems through which information flows in both directions. Applied to government communication, this suggests that successful promotion of development policies requires governments not only to disseminate information but also to create opportunities for citizens to ask questions, express concerns, and contribute feedback capable of improving policy implementation.

Empirical studies of government communication in Nigeria nevertheless indicate that policy promotion frequently remains dominated by one-way publicity models that emphasise governmental achievements while providing limited opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement (Asemah et al., 2017; Edegoh & Asemah, 2013). Such communication practices often produce considerable media exposure without corresponding improvements in public understanding or policy ownership. Citizens may therefore become familiar with government slogans and promotional campaigns while remaining uncertain about policy objectives, implementation processes, or anticipated developmental outcomes. This communication gap reduces policy legitimacy and weakens public participation in governance.

Scholars further argue that successful promotion of government policies depends on communication strategies that are context-sensitive, culturally appropriate, and responsive to audience characteristics. Development communication research demonstrates that citizens are more likely to understand and support public policies when communication incorporates local languages, community-based engagement, interpersonal communication, traditional institutions, and trusted opinion leaders alongside conventional mass media (Servaes, 2008; Nwagbara, 2020). Equally important are feedback and evaluation mechanisms, which enable governments to



monitor public understanding, assess communication effectiveness, identify misconceptions, and adjust communication strategies where necessary. Such mechanisms transform policy promotion from a one-way exercise into a continuous process of public engagement and institutional learning.

Within the context of the People's Charter of Needs, promotion should therefore be understood as a multidimensional communication process involving media relations, public education, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and feedback management. The effectiveness of this process should not be measured solely by the quantity of media coverage or publicity generated but by observable improvements in citizens' awareness, comprehension, acceptance, and participation in programmes associated with the Charter. By conceptualising policy promotion as a strategic and participatory communication function, this study aligns with contemporary public relations scholarship, which views effective government communication as fundamental to democratic governance, policy legitimacy, and sustainable development.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Government public relations has increasingly attracted scholarly attention because of its strategic role in facilitating policy communication, strengthening citizen engagement, and promoting public confidence in governance. However, empirical studies continue to report mixed outcomes regarding the effectiveness of public relations strategies in achieving these objectives, particularly within developing democracies.

Muoneke and Nwafor (2024) investigated communication interventions for public knowledge and uptake of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, the researchers administered structured questionnaires to 394 respondents drawn from the three senatorial zones of the state. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. The study revealed that although awareness of the NHIS was relatively high among residents, understanding of the scheme's operational procedures and benefits remained considerably low, thereby limiting enrolment and utilisation. The authors attributed this outcome to communication strategies that largely relied on one-way information dissemination with minimal audience segmentation and inadequate opportunities for public participation. The study concluded that government communication should move beyond publicity-oriented campaigns towards participatory communication capable of improving citizens' understanding and behavioural response.

The study provides useful evidence regarding the limitations of government communication within Ebonyi State and reinforces the argument that awareness alone does not guarantee policy acceptance or utilisation. Nevertheless, its analytical focus was restricted to communication outcomes relating to the NHIS and did not examine the strategic public relations dimensions of media relations, public education, advocacy, and feedback mechanisms that influence broader government policy communication. The present study addresses this gap by evaluating these



public relations components within the context of promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda.

Similarly, Temitope and Santas (2024) assessed the public relations strategies adopted by the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs in implementing the N-Power Programme in Nigeria. The study utilised a quantitative survey involving 358 programme beneficiaries in Abuja and analysed the data within the frameworks of the Situational Theory of Publics and Reputation Management Theory. The findings indicated that digital communication platforms, particularly Facebook, constituted the most effective medium for disseminating programme information among younger beneficiaries. However, the effectiveness of government communication was constrained by misinformation, limited digital literacy, inadequate integration of online and offline communication channels, and weak institutional feedback mechanisms. The authors concluded that the absence of structured citizen engagement significantly undermined public trust and reduced the effectiveness of government public relations.

The findings corroborate contemporary public relations literature which emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement and feedback in policy communication. However, the study concentrated on a federal social intervention programme and therefore offers limited insight into government public relations at the sub-national level. Furthermore, it focused primarily on digital communication and reputation management without comprehensively evaluating the combined influence of media relations, public education, advocacy, and feedback systems on the promotion of a state development agenda. The present study extends this empirical discourse by examining these strategic communication dimensions within the implementation of the People's Charter of Needs in Ebonyi State.

A critical review of existing empirical literature reveals that while previous studies have examined government communication in relation to public health programmes, social intervention initiatives, and digital engagement, relatively little empirical attention has been devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting comprehensive state development agendas. More importantly, previous studies have largely examined isolated communication variables rather than adopting an integrated framework that simultaneously evaluates media relations, public education and advocacy, and feedback mechanisms as determinants of policy communication effectiveness. This study addresses these identified gaps by providing empirical evidence on how these strategic public relations dimensions collectively influence the promotion of the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Excellence Theory of Public Relations

This study is anchored on the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, developed by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) and subsequently refined through the Excellence Study by Grunig,



Grunig and Dozier (2002). The Excellence Theory represents one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in modern public relations scholarship and provides a comprehensive explanation of how strategic public relations contributes to organisational effectiveness through ethical communication, stakeholder engagement, and relationship management.

The theory emerged from extensive international research conducted to identify the characteristics of excellent public relations practice across public and private organisations. The central proposition of the theory is that public relations contributes most effectively to organisational success when it functions as a strategic management activity rather than merely a publicity or information dissemination function. Excellence Theory therefore views public relations as a process of establishing mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their stakeholders through continuous dialogue, transparency, credibility, and reciprocal communication.

A fundamental assumption of the theory is that organisations achieve sustainable legitimacy and public confidence when communication is based on the two-way symmetrical model. Unlike one-way communication models that emphasise persuasion or publicity, two-way symmetrical communication encourages organisations to listen to stakeholders, respond to their concerns, incorporate public feedback into organisational decision-making, and adjust communication strategies where necessary. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that effective public relations should facilitate mutual understanding rather than organisational dominance, thereby strengthening trust, reducing conflict, and promoting long-term relationships between organisations and their publics.

The Excellence Theory identifies several characteristics of effective public relations practice. These include strategic management involvement, environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, ethical communication, media credibility, research-based planning, continuous evaluation, and responsive feedback mechanisms. Organisations that integrate these principles are better positioned to communicate complex issues, manage public expectations, and sustain stakeholder confidence during policy implementation or organisational change.

Although the theory has been widely accepted within public relations scholarship, some scholars argue that the two-way symmetrical model may not always be fully attainable because communication relationships often involve unequal power dynamics between organisations and their stakeholders. Others contend that political institutions sometimes employ public relations primarily for persuasion and image management rather than genuine dialogue. Nevertheless, Excellence Theory remains the dominant normative framework for evaluating communication effectiveness because it establishes measurable standards for ethical, participatory, and stakeholder-centred public relations practice.

The relevance of Excellence Theory to the present study lies in its emphasis on dialogue, stakeholder participation, relationship management, and communication effectiveness. The People's Charter of Needs represents the principal policy framework of the Ebonyi State



Government, whose successful implementation depends substantially on effective communication between government institutions and citizens. Government public relations therefore extends beyond publicising policy initiatives to facilitating public understanding, encouraging civic participation, managing public expectations, and responding to citizens' concerns regarding government programmes.

Specifically, the theory provides an appropriate framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the three independent variables examined in this study. Media relations represent the government's efforts to establish credible communication with citizens through traditional and digital media platforms. Public education and advocacy reflect the government's responsibility to improve citizens' understanding of the People's Charter of Needs and encourage public participation in its implementation. Feedback and evaluation mechanisms correspond directly with the theory's principle of two-way symmetrical communication by assessing the extent to which citizens' opinions, concerns, and suggestions are incorporated into government communication processes.

Furthermore, the communication outcomes proposed by Excellence Theory—namely awareness, understanding, trust, participation, and relationship quality—closely correspond with the objectives of this study, which seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda. The theory therefore provides an appropriate analytical framework for explaining how strategic government communication can strengthen policy awareness, improve citizen engagement, enhance public confidence, and facilitate the successful implementation of development programmes.

Accordingly, this study adopts Excellence Theory as its theoretical foundation because it provides the most comprehensive explanation of how strategic public relations contributes to effective governance through transparent communication, stakeholder engagement, continuous feedback, and mutually beneficial government–citizen relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The survey design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect quantitative data from a representative sample of respondents for the purpose of describing their opinions, perceptions, and experiences regarding the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government. Survey research is particularly suitable for communication and public relations studies because it permits the systematic examination of relationships among variables without manipulating the research environment. It also facilitates the collection of data from a relatively large population, thereby enhancing the generalisability of the findings.

The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to evaluate citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of government public relations strategies, particularly media relations, public



education and advocacy, and feedback mechanisms, in promoting awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the People's Charter of Needs agenda.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Ebonyi State is located in the South-East geopolitical zone and was created on 1 October 1996 from parts of the former Enugu and Abia States. The state comprises thirteen (13) Local Government Areas distributed across three senatorial districts—Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central, and Ebonyi South—with Abakaliki serving as the state capital.

The state was selected because it is the primary jurisdiction in which the People's Charter of Needs serves as the official development framework of the present administration under Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru. Since the implementation of the Charter depends substantially on effective communication between government and citizens, Ebonyi State provides an appropriate context for evaluating the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting policy awareness, public understanding, and citizen engagement.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised the adult residents (18 years and above) of Ebonyi State. According to the National Population Commission (NPC) population projections, Ebonyi State has an estimated population of approximately 3,000,000 people.

Adult residents constituted the target population because they represent the principal recipients of government public relations messages and are more likely to have been exposed to communication relating to the People's Charter of Needs through mass media, community engagement activities, government programmes, and other communication platforms.

Sample Size Determination

Given the large population of the study, the sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- **n** = Sample size
- **N** = Population size (3,000,000)
- **e** = Margin of error (0.05)

Therefore,



$$n=3,000,000 \div (1+3,000,000(0.05)^2) = \frac{3,000,000}{1+3,000,000(0.05)^2} = \frac{3,000,000}{1+75,000} = \frac{3,000,000}{76,000} = 39.47$$

$$n=3,000,000 \div (1+3,000,000(0.0025)) = \frac{3,000,000}{1+7,500} = \frac{3,000,000}{8,500} = 352.94$$
$$n=3,000,000 \div (1+3,000,000(0.0075)) = \frac{3,000,000}{1+22,500} = \frac{3,000,000}{23,500} = 127.66$$
$$n=399.95$$

The sample size was therefore approximated to 400 respondents.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a multistage sampling technique.

The first stage involved stratifying Ebonyi State into its three senatorial districts: Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central, and Ebonyi South.

In the second stage, two Local Government Areas were selected from each senatorial district using simple random sampling, giving a total of six Local Government Areas.

The third stage involved the random selection of wards within the selected Local Government Areas.

At the fourth stage, households were selected using systematic sampling, after which one eligible adult respondent was selected from each household through simple random selection.

The number of respondents selected from each senatorial district was proportionately allocated according to population size to ensure adequate representation of residents across the state.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and relevant literature on government public relations and policy communication. The questionnaire comprised two sections.

Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and senatorial district.

Section B contained Likert-scale items measuring the major variables of the study, namely:

- Media Relations
- Public Education and Advocacy
- Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms
- Promotion of the People's Charter of Needs Agenda



Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was established through face and content validity.

Copies of the instrument were submitted to experts in Public Relations, Mass Communication, and Measurement and Evaluation for critical assessment. The experts examined the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, adequacy of content coverage, and appropriateness of the measurement items with respect to the research objectives.

Their observations and recommendations guided the modification and refinement of the final instrument before administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study involving 30 respondents selected from neighbouring communities outside the study area. Data obtained from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. According to Nunnally (1978), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above indicates satisfactory internal consistency. The instrument yielded an overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeding the acceptable threshold, confirming that it possessed adequate reliability for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher, assisted by trained research assistants, personally administered the questionnaires to respondents across the selected Local Government Areas. The face-to-face administration technique was adopted to maximise the response rate, clarify ambiguous questions where necessary, and ensure that only eligible respondents participated in the study. Prior to administering the questionnaires, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that all information provided would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. The fieldwork lasted two weeks, during which completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion whenever possible.

Method of Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, weighted mean scores, and standard deviations, were employed to analyse respondents' demographic characteristics and answer the research questions. For the



interpretation of the Likert-scale responses, a criterion mean of 3.00 was adopted; mean scores of 3.00 and above indicated agreement, while mean scores below 3.00 indicated disagreement. Where hypotheses were formulated, Chi-square (χ^2) statistics were used to determine whether significant relationships existed between government public relations variables and the promotion of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

This section presents, analyses, and interprets the data collected for the study in line with the research objectives. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which 350 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 87.5%. The analyses are presented using frequencies and percentages.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 350)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	180	51.43
	Female	170	48.57
	Total	350	100.00
Age (Years)	18–25	100	28.57
	26–35	120	34.29
	36–45	80	22.86
	46 years and above	50	14.29
	Total	350	100.00
Occupation	Student	120	34.29
	Civil Servant	90	25.71
	Business Person	80	22.86
	Others	60	17.14
	Total	350	100.00

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The findings indicate that 180 respondents (51.43%) were male, while 170 (48.57%) were female, suggesting a fairly balanced gender distribution capable of providing diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of government public relations.

Regarding age, the largest proportion of respondents (34.29%) fell within the 26–35 years age bracket, followed by those aged 18–25 years (28.57%), 36–45 years (22.86%), and 46 years and above (14.29%). This distribution indicates that the study predominantly captured economically active and socially engaged adults who are more likely to interact with government communication channels.

In terms of occupation, students constituted the largest category (34.29%), followed by civil servants (25.71%), business persons (22.86%), and respondents engaged in other occupations



(17.14%). The occupational diversity suggests that opinions were obtained from various segments of society, thereby improving the representativeness of the findings.

Research Question One

To what extent are media relations effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government?

Table 2: Government Media Relations Have Effectively Promoted Citizens' Awareness and Understanding of the People's Charter of Needs Agenda

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	140	40.00
Agree	120	34.29
Undecided	50	14.29
Disagree	10	2.86
Strongly Disagree	30	8.57
Total	350	100.00

Interpretation

Table 2 shows that 140 respondents (40.00%) strongly agreed, while 120 respondents (34.29%) agreed that government media relations have effectively promoted public awareness and understanding of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. Together, these constitute **74.29%** of the respondents, indicating a strong positive perception of government media relations.

Conversely, 10 respondents (2.86%) disagreed, 30 respondents (8.57%) strongly disagreed, while 50 respondents (14.29%) were undecided. Overall, the findings suggest that government media relations have substantially contributed to creating public awareness and understanding of the People's Charter of Needs agenda among residents of Ebonyi State.

Research Question Two

To what extent are public education and advocacy effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government?



Table 3: Public Education and Advocacy Campaigns Have Improved Public Understanding and Support for the People's Charter of Needs Agenda

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	135	38.57
Agree	125	35.71
Undecided	45	12.86
Disagree	14	4.00
Strongly Disagree	31	8.86
Total	350	100.00

Interpretation

Table 3 reveals that 135 respondents (38.57%) strongly agreed, while 125 respondents (35.71%) agreed that public education and advocacy campaigns have enhanced public understanding and support for the People's Charter of Needs agenda. Collectively, 74.28% of the respondents expressed positive opinions regarding the effectiveness of government public education and advocacy efforts.

In contrast, 14 respondents (4.00%) disagreed, 31 respondents (8.86%) strongly disagreed, while 45 respondents (12.86%) remained undecided. These findings suggest that government public education and advocacy programmes have been largely effective in communicating the objectives of the People's Charter of Needs, although a relatively small proportion of respondents perceived room for improvement in the government's communication strategies.

Research Question Three

To what extent are feedback and evaluation mechanisms effective in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government?

Table 4: Government Feedback and Evaluation Mechanisms Enhance Public Participation and Policy Communication

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	128	36.57
Agree	132	37.71
Undecided	40	11.43
Disagree	22	6.29
Strongly Disagree	28	8.00
Total	350	100.00



Table 4 indicates that 128 respondents (36.57%) strongly agreed, while 132 respondents (37.71%) agreed that the Ebonyi State Government's feedback and evaluation mechanisms have enhanced public participation and improved communication relating to the People's Charter of Needs agenda. Combined, 74.28% of respondents expressed favourable perceptions of the government's feedback systems.

On the other hand, 22 respondents (6.29%) disagreed, 28 respondents (8.00%) strongly disagreed, while 40 respondents (11.43%) were undecided. These findings imply that although government feedback mechanisms are generally considered effective, strengthening opportunities for citizen participation and continuous policy evaluation could further improve government public relations and policy implementation.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government through the dimensions of media relations, public education and advocacy, and feedback and evaluation mechanisms. The findings demonstrate that these strategic public relations functions have contributed positively to citizens' awareness, understanding, and engagement with the government's development agenda.

The first finding revealed that media relations significantly enhanced public awareness and understanding of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. A substantial majority of the respondents (74.29%) agreed that government media activities have effectively communicated the objectives and programmes of the Charter. This finding reinforces the argument that strategic media engagement remains one of the most effective instruments for policy communication and agenda promotion. The finding corroborates the work of Muoneke and Nwafor (2024), who observed that government communication initiatives are capable of generating widespread public awareness when appropriate media channels are utilised. Unlike their study, however, which reported high awareness but relatively limited public understanding due to predominantly one-way communication, the present study indicates that government media relations have not only increased awareness but have also enhanced citizens' understanding of the People's Charter of Needs. The finding equally supports the assumptions of the Excellence Theory, which maintains that strategic communication contributes to organisational effectiveness by creating informed publics through credible and sustained communication.

The study further established that public education and advocacy have played a significant role in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda. Approximately 74.28% of the respondents agreed that public enlightenment campaigns, advocacy initiatives, and community engagement activities have improved their understanding of government programmes and encouraged public participation. This finding lends empirical support to Servaes' (2008) participatory communication perspective, which argues that development communication is most effective when citizens are actively involved in the communication process rather than treated as passive recipients of information. The finding also suggests that government advocacy efforts have



extended beyond routine publicity to include communication activities capable of stimulating public interest and strengthening policy ownership. Nevertheless, the proportion of respondents who remained undecided or expressed negative opinions indicates that opportunities still exist for expanding the inclusiveness of advocacy programmes, particularly among populations with limited access to government communication platforms.

With respect to feedback and evaluation mechanisms, the findings revealed that respondents generally perceived the Ebonyi State Government as providing opportunities for citizen participation and feedback regarding the implementation of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. The majority of respondents (74.28%) acknowledged that existing communication channels enable interaction between government and citizens, thereby facilitating improved policy communication and implementation. This finding is consistent with the propositions of Excellence Theory, which identifies two-way symmetrical communication as the hallmark of effective public relations practice. The result also supports the findings of Temitope and Santas (2024), who concluded that structured feedback mechanisms enhance public confidence and improve the credibility of government communication. However, unlike their study, which identified weak institutional feedback systems as a major limitation of public relations in implementing the N-Power Programme, the present study suggests that the Ebonyi State Government has made appreciable progress in establishing mechanisms that encourage citizen engagement. Nonetheless, the responses of those who expressed dissatisfaction indicate that government communication can still be strengthened by expanding opportunities for public consultation and demonstrating greater responsiveness to citizens' opinions.

Overall, the findings affirm that strategic government public relations contributes significantly to effective policy communication by improving public awareness, strengthening citizens' understanding, encouraging participation, and promoting acceptance of the People's Charter of Needs agenda. More importantly, the study demonstrates that effective government communication extends beyond information dissemination to encompass relationship building, stakeholder engagement, and participatory governance. These findings therefore reinforce contemporary public relations scholarship, which recognises communication as a strategic instrument for enhancing democratic governance and facilitating successful policy implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of government public relations in promoting the People's Charter of Needs agenda of the Ebonyi State Government through the dimensions of media relations, public education and advocacy, and feedback and evaluation mechanisms. The findings demonstrate that these strategic communication functions have significantly enhanced citizens' awareness, understanding, and support for the government's developmental agenda.

The study concludes that government public relations has become an indispensable instrument for promoting public policy, strengthening government–citizen relationships, and facilitating



participatory governance in Ebonyi State. The effectiveness of media relations in increasing policy visibility, the contribution of public education and advocacy to improving public understanding, and the role of feedback mechanisms in encouraging citizen participation collectively indicate that strategic communication has substantially supported the implementation of the People's Charter of Needs agenda.

However, the study also concludes that communication effectiveness is not solely determined by the volume of information disseminated but by the extent to which government communication remains inclusive, interactive, transparent, and responsive to citizens' expectations. Sustaining public confidence in government policies therefore requires continuous improvement in stakeholder engagement, communication accessibility, and institutional responsiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ebonyi State Government should strengthen its media relations strategy by expanding communication through traditional and digital media platforms, particularly community radio, local newspapers, television, and emerging social media channels, to ensure wider dissemination of information and greater accessibility among rural and underserved populations.
2. Government public education and advocacy programmes should adopt more participatory communication approaches by institutionalising regular town hall meetings, community dialogue sessions, stakeholder forums, and culturally appropriate awareness campaigns that encourage citizens' active involvement in the implementation of the People's Charter of Needs agenda.
3. The government should strengthen its feedback and evaluation mechanisms **by** establishing accessible, transparent, and responsive communication platforms through which citizens can express opinions, make suggestions, and receive timely responses regarding government policies and programmes. Feedback generated through these mechanisms should be systematically incorporated into policy review and implementation processes.
4. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework should be institutionalised to periodically assess the effectiveness of government public relations activities using measurable indicators such as public awareness, policy understanding, stakeholder satisfaction, citizen participation, and behavioural outcomes. Such continuous evaluation will enable government communication strategies to remain evidence-based, adaptive, and responsive to changing public information needs.



Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Ede, Maureen Ebere conceived the study, including the design, Nwogha Jeniffer Nnenna and Imeze Vision Ogonnaya collated the data, and Kaanapera Linda Nancy handled the analysis and interpretation, while Akpama Alice Mbang and Ovuoba Chukwudi Abraham wrote the initial manuscript. The entire study was done under the supervision of Dr. Nweze Samuel, and Associate Professor Oketa Chibugo Moses. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure

Where no AI-assisted tools were used

The author(s) declare that no generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing, analysis, or preparation of this manuscript.

Where AI-assisted tools were used

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used grammarly for language editing. The author(s) carefully reviewed, revised, and verified all outputs generated by the tool and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript content.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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