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The Role of Media Relations in Shaping Public Opinion on Government Policies in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examined the nature of media relations in the communication of government policies in Nigeria, to evaluate the extent to which media relations influence public opinion on government policy formulation and implementation, and identify the key challenges affecting the effectiveness of media relations in shaping public perception of government policies. The study is guided by the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that media has the power to influence public discourse and shape audience perceptions. A library research method was employed, involving a systematic review of existing literature on the topic. The findings revealed that media relations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion on government policies, and that effective media relations can enhance public trust, set the agenda, and direct public discourse. Furthermore, the study found that message framing, two-way communication, and decentralised media relations are essential for policy legitimacy. The study concludes that media relations are integral instruments for policy legitimisation, agenda formation, and public persuasion. Based on the findings, the study recommends that government ministries and agencies should appoint professionally trained media relations officers, develop tailored media relations strategies, and prioritise funding and training for media relations infrastructure.

Keywords: Media Relations, Public Opinion, Government Policies, Agenda-Setting Theory, Two-Way Communication

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary democratic societies, the role of media relations in shaping public opinion has become increasingly critical, especially in relation to government policies. Media relations, a specialised function within public relations, entails the strategic management of communication between organisations—in this case, government institutions—and the media, with the ultimate goal of influencing public understanding and perception. In the context of governance, effective media relations ensure that policy intentions are clearly communicated, public concerns are acknowledged, and official narratives are consistently disseminated across various media platforms. According to Adebayo (2021), media relations not only facilitate the projection of government policies but also serve as a barometer for public sentiment, offering a feedback loop that can help refine or reposition policies. As such, the process of shaping public opinion is not merely about message dissemination but about fostering dialogue, managing crises, and building trust through sustained engagement.

The strategic deployment of media relations becomes particularly significant in pluralistic societies like Nigeria, where public trust in governmental institutions is fragile and citizens often express scepticism toward official narratives. In such settings, the media serves as both an intermediary and a watchdog, amplifying or critiquing government policies depending on how well they are communicated and perceived. Governments must therefore rely on skilled media relations officers to craft persuasive narratives that resonate with diverse segments of the population. As Ogundipe (2022) explains, the tone, framing, and timeliness of policy-related communication can significantly influence whether the public views a policy as progressive or repressive. For instance, policies relating to fuel subsidy removal, cashless banking, or electoral reforms have historically sparked public protests and debates—often exacerbated by misinformation or poor communication strategies. Effective media relations can pre-empt such reactions by providing accurate, timely, and accessible information that addresses potential concerns and highlights policy benefits.

Furthermore, the growing influence of digital media platforms has expanded the scope and complexity of media relations. In the past, the government's engagement with the media was largely confined to traditional outlets such as newspapers, radio, and television. However, the emergence of social media has disrupted this dynamic, introducing new challenges and opportunities in the shaping of public opinion. Influencers, bloggers, and citizen journalists now compete with mainstream journalists in shaping discourse, often bypassing official communication channels. As a result, media relations in the digital age must not only respond to breaking narratives but also anticipate them, integrating digital engagement strategies into their communication models. Akinwumi (2023) posits that contemporary media relations officers must function as strategic mediators—listening to online discourse, managing reputational risks, and leveraging digital analytics to shape message delivery. In this regard, media relations is no longer a reactive function; it has become a proactive and strategic practice essential to governance and policy legitimacy.

More importantly, the effectiveness of media relations in shaping public opinion is contingent upon its ethical foundation, transparency, and inclusiveness. Public engagement in Nigeria is often characterised by deep mistrust due to years of opaque governance, unfulfilled promises, and inconsistent messaging. When media relations lack credibility, citizens turn to alternative sources—many of which may lack accuracy—thereby increasing the risk of misinformation. As Adeoye (2024) observes, trust is the currency of effective policy communication, and media relations must be rooted in authenticity, clarity, and responsiveness to the public mood. Consequently, the success or failure of policy implementation often hinges not on the merit of the policy itself but on how well it is communicated to the populace. Through deliberate, strategic, and empathetic communication, media relations can demystify complex policies,

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counter opposition, and foster national consensus, especially during periods of reform or political transition. In this light, the study sought to examine the critical role of media relations in shaping public opinion on government policies in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing relevance of media relations in public policy communication, there remains a significant disjunction between government policy intentions and public reception in Nigeria. This gap often manifests in widespread misunderstanding, resistance, or outright rejection of government policies—symptoms of poor communication strategies and inadequate media engagement. While government institutions in Nigeria have established media relations departments and employ spokespersons, many of these structures are underutilised, poorly coordinated, or reactive rather than strategic. The consequence is a fragile communication ecosystem where official messages are either distorted, ignored, or overshadowed by alternative narratives, especially on social media. As Nwachukwu (2021) notes, the lack of a coherent media relations framework within government ministries and agencies undermines public confidence in policy decisions and opens space for misinformation to flourish.

Moreover, there is an observable deficit in empirical studies that specifically interrogate the strategic role of media relations in policy communication within the Nigerian context. Most existing literature on government communication has focused on political advertising, media framing of crises, or citizen engagement on social media (Okolie, 2022; Eze, 2023). While these areas are important, they often treat media relations as peripheral, despite its central role in agenda-setting, image management, and public reassurance. Consequently, scholars and practitioners lack robust data and analysis on how media relations units within government institutions function, what communication tools they deploy, and how effective these tools are in shaping public understanding of complex policies. This gap creates a knowledge vacuum that limits both academic discourse and practical policy reforms. It is against this backdrop that the current study is situated.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the nature of media relations in the communication of government policies in Nigeria.
2. Evaluate the extent to which media relations influence public opinion on government policy formulation and implementation.
3. Identify the key challenges affecting the effectiveness of media relations in shaping public perception of government policies.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Media Relations

Media relations, as a specialised field within public communication, involves the strategic interaction between organisations and the media to influence public discourse, shape perceptions, and build reputational capital. Although often associated with corporate entities, media relations are equally essential in government communication, particularly in the dissemination and framing of policy messages.

Firstly, according to Adebisi (2021), media relations refer to the systematic process of building and sustaining positive working relationships with media professionals to ensure consistent, accurate, and favourable coverage of institutional activities. This definition underscores the relational aspect of media engagement, suggesting that effective media relations are not transactional but rooted in mutual trust, professional rapport, and shared interests. In the context of government communication, this relationship

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ensures that media outlets serve not merely as information carriers but as collaborative partners in shaping public narratives around policy decisions.

Secondly, Nwachukwu (2023) defines media relations as the deliberate and strategic management of information flows between an institution and the press with the goal of influencing public perception, agenda setting, and crisis communication. This perspective places emphasis on media relations as a tool for managing public opinion through message framing and timing. Importantly, it highlights the power dynamics at play—where communication is not only about informing the public but also about shaping interpretations, opinions, and ultimately, public behaviour. In political communication, especially, how a policy is introduced through media narratives can determine its acceptance or rejection by the citizenry.

Thirdly, Ogunleye (2022) conceptualises media relations as an integrated communication function involving planning, content development, and media engagement to promote institutional transparency, credibility, and public accountability. This definition draws attention to the ethical dimensions of media relations, particularly in governance. It positions media relations not merely as a promotional activity but as a vehicle for democratic accountability. In environments where public trust in government is low, as is often the case in Nigeria, transparent and credible media engagement can help rebuild confidence and encourage civic participation in policy discourse.

Collectively, these definitions reveal that media relations go beyond press releases and news conferences. Rather, they represent a strategic communication mechanism through which governments can shape how their policies are perceived, understood, and responded to. Therefore, effective media relations must balance persuasive communication with transparency, responsiveness, and engagement across both traditional and digital media landscapes.

Concept of Public Opinion on Government Policies

Public opinion is a cornerstone of democratic governance, reflecting the collective beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments of a population regarding societal issues, including the policies and actions of the state. When properly harnessed, public opinion serves as both a feedback mechanism and a guidepost for responsive governance.

To begin with, Okoye (2020) believes that public opinion is the aggregation of individual attitudes and emotional responses toward political institutions, decisions, and policy proposals, shaped by exposure to media, interpersonal discussions, and cultural values. This definition recognises that public opinion is dynamic, shaped by multiple influences, and not merely a reflection of rational analysis. In relation to government policies, it means that citizens' views are shaped not only by policy content but also by how they *feel* about the communicators and the channels through which information is delivered. Thus, public opinion is both cognitive and affective, making it crucial for media relations strategies to consider tone, empathy, and audience framing.

In a similar vein, Ezeani (2022) describes public opinion as the collective expression of societal attitudes concerning the legitimacy, effectiveness, and equity of government actions, often measured through polls, public commentary, and media discourse. This perspective highlights the evaluative role of public opinion—it serves as a metric by which the public judges the fairness and competence of government policies. The media plays a critical role in facilitating these evaluations by providing platforms for discourse, framing policy issues, and enabling access to diverse viewpoints. Therefore, public opinion is not merely an outcome; it is an ongoing process of public judgement shaped through communicative interactions.

Furthermore, Aliyu (2024) defines public opinion on government policies as the evolving consensus or

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dissent of the population regarding state policies, shaped by perceived personal and societal impact, mediated through public discourse and collective memory. This definition introduces the temporal and experiential dimension of public opinion—it is shaped over time by cumulative experiences with governance and is often anchored in public memory of past policies. Consequently, citizens may judge current policies not only on their merits but based on historical performance and expectations. In such cases, media relations serve the important function of contextualising present decisions, drawing contrasts or continuities with past efforts, and clarifying the government's intentions.

Taken together, these views indicate that public opinion on government policies is a complex and evolving social construct influenced by communication channels, personal experiences, cultural values, and historical narratives. For government institutions, understanding this complexity is essential to crafting communication strategies that are inclusive, culturally resonant, and responsive to public concerns. In this context, media relations serve as the bridge between policy actors and the people, helping to shape perceptions that either bolster or undermine policy legitimacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The State of Government Communication in Nigeria

Government communication in Nigeria has evolved significantly over the years; however, it remains plagued by structural inefficiencies, lack of strategic planning, and low levels of trust from the public. While most ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) have public relations units and designated spokespersons, the execution of communication strategies is often fragmented, uncoordinated, and reactive. According to Okeke (2021), many government communication offices lack the institutional capacity to develop long-term communication strategies, relying instead on ad hoc press releases and vague briefings that fail to convey clear policy directions. This practice results in communication gaps, leaving the media and public to speculate or misinterpret policy intentions.

In addition, the underutilisation of communication specialists and trained media relations professionals undermines the effectiveness of government communication. Appointments to public communication roles are often politically motivated rather than merit-based, resulting in the deployment of poorly equipped spokespersons who lack training in crisis communication, media framing, and stakeholder engagement. Chukwuma and Adedoyin (2023) argue that the absence of communication professionals within government communication teams is one of the primary causes of public misunderstanding and policy resistance. These spokespersons are often unable to manage negative narratives or counter misinformation effectively, leading to public disillusionment and distrust.

Moreover, a critical shortcoming of government communication is the absence of a feedback mechanism. While policies are communicated to the public through official press statements or presidential addresses, there is little evidence of structures that allow the government to listen to, collect, and incorporate citizen feedback into policy refinement. According to Usman and Ojo (2024), the one-way nature of government communication in Nigeria limits citizen participation and contributes to the perception that the government is disconnected from the needs of the populace. This undermines policy ownership, reduces compliance, and can lead to public resistance.

It is also worth noting that Nigeria's multilingual and multicultural context poses a major challenge to effective government communication. Government messaging often relies heavily on English and overlooks the linguistic diversity of the Nigerian population. Ibrahim (2022) notes that this failure to localise communication limits the accessibility of vital information, particularly in rural areas and among marginalised groups. As a result, a significant portion of the population remains uninformed about policy

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developments, thereby weakening the national conversation and reducing engagement with government initiatives.

Furthermore, the growth of digital platforms and citizen journalism has altered the media environment, demanding more agility and responsiveness from government communication structures. Government media relations have largely failed to adapt to these changes. Nnadi (2024) posits that many public communication officers are unfamiliar with the workings of social media and digital communication tools, leading to a lag in response to online criticisms or misinformation. The absence of verified government handles actively engaging citizens in real time leaves a vacuum filled by influencers, bloggers, and anonymous actors whose content may be unverified or intentionally misleading. Thus, digital ineffectiveness in media relations remains a critical concern for policy perception in Nigeria.

Factors Influencing Public Opinion on Government Policies

Public opinion, especially concerning government policies, is influenced by a multitude of socio-political, economic, psychological, and communicative variables. A foundational factor is trust in government institutions. In Nigeria, decades of perceived corruption, policy failure, and lack of transparency have eroded public trust in political leadership. As Obasi and Chukwu (2023)observe, when trust is lacking, even well-crafted and potentially beneficial policies are met with suspicion. Citizens often assume ulterior motives behind government action, particularly in instances where prior experiences with policy implementation have been marred by inefficiency or exploitation.

Another key determinant is media credibility. The Nigerian media landscape is diverse, encompassing traditional outlets (radio, television, newspapers) and digital platforms (blogs, social media, YouTube channels). The framing of policy issues by these media outlets significantly shapes public opinion. For example, when a policy is reported as anti-people, the public's response is likely to be hostile, irrespective of the policy's actual content. Ezeani (2022) argues that the slant of media coverage—whether neutral, positive, or negative—can trigger emotional responses such as anger, support, or apathy, which in turn influence mass opinion.

Additionally, personal and collective experience plays an important role in shaping how people perceive policies. A community that has suffered the negative consequences of past reforms—such as fuel price hikes or devaluation of the naira—is more likely to resist similar future proposals. According to Oluwasegun and Ahmed (2023), memory of hardship tends to shape expectations, which becomes the lens through which citizens evaluate new policy directions. Moreover, if people perceive that a policy disproportionately benefits elites or disadvantages marginalised groups, public sentiment will likely turn negative.

Socio-economic status and education also contribute to how people interpret and judge government policies. Educated individuals may be more capable of analysing policy rationale and separating facts from propaganda, while those with lower literacy levels might rely more heavily on hearsay and local opinion leaders. Ajayi and Nkereuwem (2021) find that in areas with limited access to formal education and media, public opinion is often shaped by traditional authorities or informal networks, which may not always be aligned with official government narratives.

Religious and ethnic affiliations further complicate public opinion in Nigeria. Given the country's history of ethnic rivalry and religious politicisation, some citizens evaluate policies through the lens of identity politics. Policies introduced by administrations perceived to favour a particular ethnic or religious group may be resisted by others who feel marginalised. Okonkwo (2020) highlights that such sentiments have influenced public response to security measures and economic policies in northern versus southern regions,

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illustrating the deeply rooted nature of identity in opinion formation.

Lastly, the transparency and accessibility of policy communication significantly influence public perception. When the government fails to explain a policy's objectives, costs, and expected benefits clearly, the public fills the gap with speculation. Lack of clarity can lead to misinformation, conspiracy theories, or exaggerated fears, especially in a politically charged environment. As Adeyemo (2025) observes, when information is incomplete or ambiguous, citizens rely on assumptions, which are often guided by previous experiences and dominant media narratives.

Role of Media Coverage and Messaging in Shaping Policy Perception

Media coverage serves as the primary channel through which citizens become aware of and interpret government policies. The agenda-setting role of the media means that how issues are presented—and what is emphasised or omitted—can significantly shape public priorities and judgements. According to Ogundele (2021), the prominence given to certain aspects of a policy, such as its cost or controversy, can shape perceptions more powerfully than the policy itself. When the media fixates on dissent or opposition, even neutral audiences may adopt negative attitudes towards the policy.

Another essential dimension is message framing and emotional appeal. When government spokespersons fail to explain the human or developmental benefits of a policy, media reports may default to oppositional frames that stress hardship, conflict, or elitism. For instance, the policy to remove fuel subsidies, though economically justifiable, was widely criticised due to its sudden implementation and insufficient communication. Ajiboye and Udochi (2023) note that emotional language in media headlines—using terms like "suffering," "hunger," and "betrayal"—evoked public outrage and mass protests, which could have been mitigated by proactive and empathetic communication from media relations teams.

The rise of social media as a primary platform for political discourse has further complicated media relations. On platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and WhatsApp, users generate content at high speed, and stories can go viral before official sources issue clarifications. Ibrahim (2024) observes that in such an ecosystem, delay in responding to rumours or incomplete narratives can be damaging. The government's reluctance or slowness to engage with online conversations has allowed misinformation to gain traction. Thus, media relations strategies must now include digital engagement, social listening, and timely rebuttals.

Importantly, storytelling and localisation of policy impacts have been recognised as effective tools in policy communication. Instead of abstract statistics and complex terminology, media relations officers should use relatable stories that illustrate how policies improve everyday lives. For instance, explaining how a housing policy will affect a single mother or how an agricultural subsidy benefits a rural farmer can resonate more strongly with the public. Adeyemo (2025) emphasises that this narrative-driven approach humanises policies and builds emotional connection, which in turn fosters understanding and support.

Furthermore, the role of media ethics and professionalism cannot be overemphasised. When journalists lack access to credible government sources, they may resort to speculation or quote anonymous insiders, which can distort public perception. Hence, building trust between government media relations teams and credible journalists is essential. Regular press briefings, access to public documents, and the provision of spokespersons for interviews can improve the accuracy and depth of policy reporting. According to Ogbonna and Salaudeen (2022), strong media-government relationships rooted in professionalism and transparency can improve not only coverage quality but also public trust in the information being disseminated.

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Empirical Review

This section reviews existing studies that relate to the current research, highlighting their objectives, scope, methodology, findings, and theoretical foundations. It also explains how these studies agree or differ from the present study.

Nwachukwu (2021) examined the effectiveness of official media briefings in shaping public narratives during major economic policy changes in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2012 and 2020 fuel subsidy removal policies. The study employed a qualitative content analysis of official statements, press releases, and media interviews from government spokespersons and presidential media aides. The findings revealed that although the government made efforts to engage with the media, its approach was largely uncoordinated and reactionary. Media briefings were often issued only after public outrage had grown, thereby failing to shape initial narratives. The study concluded that the lack of a proactive and participatory media strategy contributed significantly to policy rejection and citizen protests. The study relates to the current research in that both investigate how government communication influences public opinion. However, it differs from the current study in that Nwachukwu focused solely on media briefings regarding economic policies, while the current study takes a broader view of media relations across various policy domains. Moreover, Nwachukwu used content analysis, whereas the present study employs a conceptual and library-based approach.

Ogbonna and Salaudeen (2022) explored the framing of COVID-19 lockdown policies in Nigerian newspapers and their impact on public compliance. Using a mixed-method approach that combined content analysis of news stories and a public perception survey, the study analysed how newspapers such as *Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *The Guardian* framed the lockdown policies as either protective, authoritarian, or politically driven. The research found that frames highlighting citizen welfare and public health encouraged greater compliance, while those suggesting political manipulation reduced trust and increased defiance. It further recommended improved collaboration between media relations officers and journalists to ensure accurate framing of sensitive policies. The study relates to the current one by emphasising the role of media relations and framing in influencing policy reception. However, it differs in scope, as it focuses solely on health-related policy during a crisis period (COVID-19), whereas the current study investigates media relations across all government policies. Additionally, the prior study adopted a survey-based and content analysis method, while the current research employs a systematic review of existing literature and is guided by Agenda-Setting Theory.

Ibrahim (2023) conducted a qualitative study on the strategic use of digital platforms by Nigerian ministries to engage citizens on policy issues. The research employed key informant interviews with digital media officers in select ministries (Information, Health, and Youth Development), exploring their experiences with real-time citizen engagement via Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Facebook. Findings indicated that most ministries lacked training in digital communication and had no unified strategy for managing online backlash or misinformation. Many digital media units acted independently without coordination with press or policy departments, which weakened the overall effectiveness of media relations. The study recommended a national policy on digital government communication to unify engagement practices and improve public trust. This study relates to the present research in that both investigate government strategies for shaping public opinion. However, it differs by concentrating on digital media engagement alone, while the current study considers both traditional and new media channels under the broader scope of media relations. It also differs methodologically, as Ibrahim relied on in-depth interviews, while the current study is grounded in a library research approach.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda-Setting Theory

The theoretical foundation for this study is grounded in the Agenda-Setting Theory, which was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 during their seminal study of the 1968 U.S. presidential election. The theory postulates that while the media may not be successful in telling people what to think, it is remarkably effective in telling them *what to think about*. In essence, the media influences the importance placed on issues by selecting and prioritising topics for public attention (McCombs, 2004). The salience of certain issues in public discourse is often a reflection of the amount and nature of media coverage those issues receive.

Ajiboye and Udochi (2023) affirm that agenda-setting is central to understanding the relationship between media and public opinion, particularly in democratic societies where policy decisions often depend on public perception and legitimacy. The theory explains how the media—through emphasis, repetition, and framing—elevates certain policy matters over others, thus shaping the perceived importance of government actions in the eyes of citizens. This is highly relevant to media relations, where government actors actively engage the media to project favourable narratives or downplay controversial policies.

The theory is constructed around three central tenets:

- ***Issue Salience*:** This refers to the degree of prominence or emphasis placed on a policy issue in media discourse. According to Okoro and Asemah (2022), issues that receive sustained coverage and frequent mention in media outlets tend to gain prominence in the public's mind. Government media relations can therefore be used to push certain policies onto the public agenda by strategically providing updates, organising press briefings, or placing editorial content to sustain attention.
- ***Priming:*** This construct involves the media's influence on the standards or criteria by which citizens evaluate political actors or public policies. If media coverage—facilitated by government media relations—continuously portrays a policy as effective, urgent, or morally sound, the public is more likely to evaluate the policy through these lenses. As Ogundele (2021**)** argues, priming can be used to focus attention on benefits while minimising public scrutiny of challenges, thus subtly shaping support.
- ***Framing*:** Framing goes a step further by shaping *how* the public thinks about an issue. Through language, visuals, tone, and context, the media determines whether a policy is seen as people-oriented, elitist, repressive, or inclusive. Government media relations officers can influence this process by supplying press kits, providing expert spokespersons, and ensuring clarity in policy communication. Obasi and Chukwu (2023) emphasise that without strategic framing, media coverage can be hijacked by opposition narratives, leading to misunderstanding and resistance.

The application of Agenda-Setting Theory to this study is particularly appropriate, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of how government agencies and public relations units use media relations to guide both media content and public discourse on policy issues.

METHODOLOGY

For the current study, a library research method was employed. This approach involves a systematic and comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic, including academic journals, books, conference proceedings and other relevant sources (Asemah-Ibrahim, Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2022a, 2022b). This method was used as it is a cost-effective and time-efficient method that allows for the exploration of a wide range of sources, making it an ideal approach for this study (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo &

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Okpanachi, 2012).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that media relations serve as a fundamental communication strategy for shaping public opinion on government policies in Nigeria. Through structured engagement with journalists, effective press briefings, and coordinated message dissemination, media relations help influence how citizens perceive the intent, legitimacy, and urgency of various policy actions. This aligns with the view of Obasi and Chukwu (2023), that well-organised media relations enhance public trust in policy initiatives, especially when government spokespersons provide transparent and timely information.

Furthermore, this study confirms the relevance of the Agenda-Setting Theory in explaining the relationship between media engagement and public opinion. As proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), and supported by Ajiboye and Udochi (2023), the prominence and frequency of issues reported in the media—often influenced by government PR efforts—directly affect how the public prioritises and interprets policy topics. The findings showed that when government media relations are consistent and proactive, they effectively set the agenda and direct public discourse, fostering better understanding and, in some cases, acceptance of controversial or complex policies.

In addition, the findings underscore the importance of message framing in shaping public interpretation of government policies. Consistent with Ogbonna and Salaudeen (2022), this study discovered that the way a policy is framed—whether as beneficial, inclusive, or coercive—can significantly influence whether the public supports or opposes it. For instance, when government communication frames policy reforms in relatable and citizen-oriented terms, the public tends to engage more positively. Conversely, policies that are poorly framed or released without media coordination tend to generate misunderstanding and resistance.

Moreover, the study highlights that two-way communication and decentralised media relations improve policy legitimacy. Findings align with the position of Chukwuma and Adedoyin (2023), that participatory media engagements—such as town hall meetings and regional interviews—enhance the inclusiveness and local relevance of government messaging. This indicates that public opinion is not just shaped by what is said, but by how and where it is communicated.

The study also revealed significant challenges in the coordination of media relations across ministries and government agencies, particularly in terms of digital engagement. While platforms like Twitter (now X), Facebook, and Instagram offer new channels for policy communication, the lack of trained personnel and strategic consistency reduces their impact. This supports the findings of Ibrahim (2023), that Nigerian ministries often operate in isolation, lacking a centralised digital media policy.

Overall, this study confirms that media relations—when strategically designed—can significantly shape public opinion on government policies, supporting theoretical claims from both the Agenda-Setting Theory and Framing Theory. These findings validate the central argument of the research: that media relations are not mere accessories of governance, but integral instruments for policy legitimisation, agenda formation, and public persuasion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that effective media relations are essential for shaping public opinion on government policies in Nigeria. When government agencies actively engage the media through consistent, transparent, and citizen-centred messaging, they can significantly improve public understanding and acceptance of policy initiatives. The strategic application of media relations helps set the public agenda, frame narratives, and influence how the public evaluates policy actions. However, the

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effectiveness of these efforts depends on the professionalism of media relations personnel, the timing and clarity of communication, and the extent to which the public feels engaged and informed. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government ministries and agencies should appoint professionally trained media relations officers and establish unified media communication guidelines across ministries. This will ensure consistency in the messaging and prevent contradictory narratives across government channels.
2. Media relations practitioners should develop tailored media strategies that consider the unique concerns of diverse demographic groups and regions. This includes using local languages, community radio stations, and decentralised platforms to engage citizens at the grassroots level.
3. Policy Makers and Political Stakeholders should prioritise funding and training for media relations infrastructure within governance systems. This includes workshops on agenda-setting, framing techniques, and media ethics for all communication officers.

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