

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS SOCIAL MARKETING TOOL FOR CURBING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND NEGATIVE IMAGE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of public relations as a social marketing tool for checkmating electoral violence and its consequent negative image implications on Nigeria. It is motivated by the incessant cycle of violence that follows almost every general election season in the country. The specific objectives include to ascertain the correlation between pre- and post-election violence, and election rigging on the negative international image of Nigeria; and also the potency of public relations strategies for arresting the negative international image problem. The survey research design was used in the study conducted in Nigeria's former capital territory, Lagos, the present capital territory, Abuja, and the dominant oil city, PortHarcourt, all representing the three geopolitical areas of the country. A sample size of 399 was determined through Taro Yamane formula from a population of 8,000 foreigners and diplomats in the country. Data were analysed with chi-square and spearman correlation statistical tools. Results indicate a significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence, and election rigging to the negative international image of Nigeria. Again, that public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country's negative international image.

Keywords: Electoral Violence, Social Marketing, Public Relations Strategies, International Public Relations.

1.1 Introduction

Election violence is a coercive and deliberate strategy used by political actors – incumbents as well as opposition parties – to advance their interests or achieve specific political goals in relation to an electoral contest. It may take place in all parts of the electoral cycle: in the run-up to elections, on the day of elections, and in the immediate post-election period (Togiba, 2022; Eldridge et. al., 2012). Election-related violence is not limited to physical violence but includes other coercive means, such as the threat of violence, intimidation and harassment (Kuku, 2022). Election violence or election-related violence is understood as violent action against people,

property, or the electoral process, intended to influence the electoral process before, during or after elections (Atuobi, 2011). The costs associated with electoral violence are high, even in situations in which the human death toll remains low, election violence may have a critical impact on the electoral process, the outcome of the elections and their perceived legitimacy (United Nations, 2022). It may come in form of a negative effect on the prospects for democratic consolidation, and people's perceptions about democracy as a political system (United Nations, 2022). Electoral violence may also create a humanitarian crisis and halt or reverse socio-economic development programmes. In extreme situations, it may increase the risk of armed conflict or civil war. Election-violence can also go beyond the societies where it occurs and affect neighbouring states by displacing large border populations, introducing a humanitarian crisis, and increasing the circulation of arms as well as armed violence, which may contribute to instability in already volatile regions (McLennan, 2021; [Kleinfeld, Sedaca & 2024](#)).

For instance, according to Bekoe (2011), Nigeria's 2011 general election received high praise for being well-managed, but post-election violence claimed 800 lives over three days in northern Nigeria and displaced 65,000 people, making the elections the most violent in Nigeria's history. Once the violence erupted, only soldiers succeeded in stopping it. According to reports, some Nigerian politicians adjudge elections as good only if they win, but any election they lose is bad no matter how free and fair (Okpotor, 2020; Kola, Shola & Samuel, 2020).

Dad and Khan (2023) notes that pre, during and post-election violence and election rigging are major problems in all Nigerian elections. At the centre of all such electoral violence and malpractices in Nigeria are youths, misguided by the political elites (Gbati, 2024). Gbati (2024) also observes that all these have contributed to the lack of confidence in Nigeria democracy, electoral system, process and results, which have also eroded the image of the country internationally. Hence, observers advise that unless countries find a way to prevent pre, during and post-election violence and electoral malpractices, the country may not yet be said to have begun the practice of democracy (Birch, Daxecker & Höglund, 2020; Kola, Shola & Samuel, 2020; Laakso & Kariuki, 2023). Unless something is done to deal with these problems at the early stage, such countries may not be able to experience true democracy, and this could make them detestable countries in the committee of nations (Kuperman, 2022; Nnabuko et al., 2013).

Nigerian political leaders are accused of instigating directly or indirectly all the electoral violence that have occurred in the country (Birch et al., 2020; Bekoe, 2011). This must have spurned all the wide-scale electoral violence and killings that followed the results of almost every election in the country, and cause further damage to its international image (Birch et al., 2020; Nnabuko et al., 2013).

Jefkins (1986), observed that public relations is good deed publicly acknowledged. While Black (1984) said that no effort should be spared at communicating organization's success to the public so as to achieve some favourable corporate profile. Just like a product or service can be marketed by a corporate organization, peace can also be professionally packaged and marketed by individuals, organizations, communities, and nations, for the betterment and goodwill of all mankind (Odigbo et al., 2022). In order to have violent-free, peaceful elections, everywhere in the world, politicians and the electorates must shun the do-or-die or win-at-all-cost attitude, and adopt the spirit of sportsmanship, friendliness and conviviality (Odigbo et al., 2022; Sanford, 2023). Such type of genial electioneering atmosphere which is also needed to steer the ship of governance peacefully anywhere in the world, could be achieved through effective social marketing strategies (Odigbo, Amadi & Bassey, 2018).

Social marketing is the successful application of marketing tools and techniques in social issues (Parker, 2014). It has been majorly concerned with targeting the individual to influence

behaviour change, most especially translating negative or undesirable behaviour into desirable or positive changes (Odigbo, Amadi, & Bassey, 2018). In various social marketing campaigns, the social network theory is factored in and used to build social ties that connect families, friends, relatives, churches, town unions and associations, villages, communities and virtual communities through effective marketing communication campaigns (Eze, Odigbo & Imoke, 2022). However, for social marketing to contribute significantly towards behavior changes from ignoble to positive behavior, proactive rather than reactive social marketing strategies have to be given serious attention (Odigbo, Okonkwo & Onugu, 2022). This implies having a social marketing master not a reactive or firebrigade approach. The essence of social marketing is to use a combination of marketing-mix tools to induce people to accept a social course, which may be unpalatable, but for their own good. The 8Ps of social marketing-mix elements could also be employed in such campaigns to make people all over the world to shun social vices like bribery and corruption, alcoholism, drug abuse, rape, domestic violence via messages in both traditional and internet media (Odigbo, Okonkwo & Akpam, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

One of the major reasons that scare foreigners away from the shores of any nation is the orgy of violence that follows their general elections. Many general elections in Africa and other developing countries are often characterized by violence, killings of political opponents or their supporters, arsons, wanton destruction of properties, and many more (Okpotor, 2020; Gbati, 2024; Birch, Daxecker & Höglund, 2020). This makes citizens of the advanced nations of the world where peaceful elections are held to harbor poor perceptions of such countries with violence-prone elections and their citizens (Laakso & Kariuki, 2023; Ishiyama et al., 2023).

For instance, in Nigeria, every general election since the 2007 election cycle, have been marred by widespread violence, ballot box snatching, intimidation, harassment of voters, thuggery, and general insecurity. This is notwithstanding the fact that non-violence was usually the professed concern of many stakeholders who usually sign peace-accords well before the elections (International Crisis Group, 2007; MULAC, 2007; Odigbo et al., 2016).

In some instances, the police and members of other security agencies who were supposed to prevent violence and other electoral malpractices are alleged to be aiding and abetting such ignoble acts in favour of ruling parties (ERN, 2007; CFCR, 2007). For instance, Ajaero (2007) reported that there were several cases where security agencies looked the other way while violence and electoral violence are being inflicted on innocent voters who have come out to cast their votes, thereby disenfranchising them. The results of such elections are sometimes written-off by both international and local observers (TMG, 2007), yet the alleged winners are often sworn-in to assume powers. Election-monitoring civil society organisations often report that such polls are seriously flawed and should be cancelled or re-run (TMG, 2007:2), but this call is often disregarded, thereby casting aspersions on the credibility of the elections and the winners (Ware, 2024; Sauer, 2023; Tsa and Mbaeyi, 2007).

Reports by international observers often equally seriously condemn such violence-prone and violence-marred elections, with their attendant negative and damaging perceptions to the international images of the nations concerned. For instance, international election observers report that based on generally accepted international standards for credible, free, fair and transparent elections, most of Nigeria's elections since 2007 fell short (WACSO, 2007, Commonwealth Observer Mission, 2007; International Republican Institute, 2007; National Democratic Institute, 2007; International Crisis Group, 2007; USAID, 2011; Okpotor, 2020; Dad & Khan, 2023; Gbati, 2024; USAID, 2011).

Those results of such elections also often ignite post-election violence as voters spontaneously protest results that did not reflect true voters' expectations (International Crisis Group, 2007). Such crises threaten the fragile peace of the countries, and their socio-economic development, hence, the motivation for this study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To ascertain the correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- ii. To determine the correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the potency of public relations strategies in arresting the negative international image drift.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- i. Is there a significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria?
- ii. Is there also a strong correlation between electoral malpractices and the negative international image of Nigeria?
- iv. Could public relations strategies be a significant potent weapon for arresting the negative international image drift?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

To find answers to the questions, the following null-hypotheses were tested:

- i. There is no significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- ii. There is no strong correlation between electoral malpractices and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- iii. Public relations strategies would not be a significant potent weapon for arresting the country's negative international image drift.

1.6 Methodology

Survey design was used in the study. The area of study was Nigeria's former capital territory, Lagos, the present capital territory, Abuja, the dominant oil city, PortHarcourt. The criterion for the choice of the three cities in Nigeria was because almost all the foreign diplomatic personnel in the country and also expatriate workers, live and work there. The primary data were, thus, gathered through electronic questionnaire (E-questionnaire) via the Internet to respondents in remote/less accessible areas, and hardcopy questionnaire to respondents in the cities. The population of the study was estimated at 8,000 diplomats and expatriates in the country. The data were analysed with Likert's 5-points scale, measure of central tendencies and Spearman's correlation coefficient. The sample size of 399 was determined through Taro Yamane formular for finite populations.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

1.7.1 Dimension of Electoral Violence

Electoral violence has cultural, structural and religious dimensions to its causes. The cultural perspective presupposes the existence of a political culture of thuggery that generally predisposes actors to engage in violence and intimidation during political contests as have been the case in Nigeria over the years (Atuobi, 2012:11; Odigbo et al., 2022, Okpotor, 2020; Gbati,

2024). The structural dimension suggests that society and politics are organized in a manner that generates conflict (Friedrich and CRC, 2001). Both perspectives are usually reinforced by ethnic rivalries and mobilisation in politics in most African countries that have been volatile during elections (Atuobi, 2012; Kola et al., 2020; Laakso & Kariuki, 2023; Birch et al., 2020). Structural election violence accrue from poor election organisation and management problems, like weakness in the electoral system, and the lack of independence and capacity of election management bodies to deliver on their constitutional mandate (Birch et al., 2020). The proponents of this school of thought believe that for an election management body to manage free and fair elections, it must be truly independent and free from the influence of the ruling party or opposition parties in line with the constitutional provisions (Birch et al., 2020; Sanford, 2023). But this is not always the case in most African countries, hence, the rampant incidence of pre and post-election violence (Laakso & Kariuki, 2023; Tshishonga & Aluko, 2023; Gbati, 2024). The capacity of the election management body to manage transparent, free and fair elections can be measured by its ability to perform functions such as voter registration, training polling assistants, voter education, managing logistics on election day, vote tallying, announcing results and settling electoral disputes, without constraints (United Nations, 2022).

On the other hand, religious election violence occur when religious sentiments, religious cleavages and religious sympathies are the major reasons for pre and post-election violence, as was the case in the Nigeria's general election of 2011 and even previous elections. Politicians here hide under religious cover to drum support and to mobilise restive crowds against their opponent who is of another religious persuasion. All these three theories of election violence combined, have been playing themselves out in Nigerian elections since independence in measured degrees from one election to another.

There have been arguments that former rebel parties engage more in electoral violence in Africa (Ishiyama, Marshall & Stewart, 2023). However, Flores and Nooruddin (2023), and vanBaalén (2023), believe that in the unbridled quest to retain power, the incumbents perpetrate election violence more in Africa. Sometimes, they hide under the cover of religion or ethnicity to do this. For instance, in Nigeria, apart from the 1960s where electoral violence were largely due to allegations of election rigging, other wide-scale election violence in the country since then wore the garb of religious and ethnic colourations (Jombo & Bamigbose, 2023). This is usually along the lines of the two dominant religions in the country – Islam and Christianity. This Muslim-Christian violence is tilted along the country's ethnic, regional and tribal lines, with long standing expectation of sharing power. For instance, many believed that the unprecedented 2011 election violence witnessed in Nigeria's post-election crisis of that year, was because a Christian and southerner, President Jonathan won, and people in the North felt strongly that he should have conceded the presidential bid to a northerner and Muslim in honour of an unwritten rotation of power agreement between the north and south (Bekoe, 2011; Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010). President Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner and Christian, had been replaced by Umaru Yar'Adua, a northerner and Muslim. Yar'Adua's untimely death in 2010, midway through his term, catapulted then-Vice President Jonathan to the presidency. The proponents of the power rotation argued that Jonathan should not have contested the presidency because the north had not finished its turn (Aljazeera.com, 2013). Thus, it does not matter to them the political pedigree or qualifications of a candidate and his ability to deliver services to the people, as long he belongs to their religious persuasion. To the proponents of this mind-set, political contests and power-sharing arrangements in the country must be constructed along the lines of the two dominant religions and ethnic divides.

1.7.2 The Role of Social Marketing, Public Relations and International Public Relations

Sorkaa (2007: 32) confirms that public relations practitioners have a crucial role to play in enhancing a holistic national development because they are professionals equipped with the skills and training to coordinate the establishment and sustenance of relationships, image and reputation management as well as peaceful settlements of conflicts, including the checkmating of electoral violence (Birch, 2020; Kola, 2020; Laakso & Kariuki, 2023; Blair et al, 2023). In this wise, public relations can be used as a tool for the eradication of political mistrusts and violence in Nigeria (Kola, 2020; Laakso & Kariuki, 2023). It can be safely argued that the conflicts existing among politicians can be averted if the right public relations techniques are applied. A popular public relations adage says that “it is better to close the door before the horse escapes than to leave the door open for the horse to escape before you start chasing it.” This is to say, that proactive public relations strategy is the key to success in the fight against political and electoral violence. Public relations issues and crisis management strategies can also be used to determine the causes of the pre and post-election-violence in the country, with a view to correcting the ugly trend. Public relations media could also be employed to enlighten Nigerian electorates not to permit ourselves to be influenced by financial, religious, tribal and political dichotomies over and above national interest during elections (Odigbo, 2022; Chiakaan et al., 2021). In most developing countries like Nigeria, it is often the incumbent that perpetrate political violence through their sit-tight attitude to politics (Ishiyama et al., 2023; Flores & Nooruddin, 2023; vanBaalén, 2023; Tshishonga, 2023; Jombo & Bamigbose, 2023).

1.8 Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Respondents’ Demographic Data

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Sex:		
Male:	243	60.90%
Female	156	39.09%
Age:		
25 – 35 years	83	20.80%
36-45 years	131	32.83%
46 – 55 years	111	27.82%
56 years Or Above	74	18.55%
Occupation:		
Diplomatic Staff	93	23.31%
Expatriate Workers	167	41.85%
Foreign Journalists	139	34.84%
TOTAL	399	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Data on table 1 indicate that 60.90% of the respondents were male, while 39.09% were female; 20.80% were in the age range of 25 to 35 years, 32.83% in the age range of 36 to 45 years; 27.82% in the age bracket of 46 to 55 years, while 18.55% were 56 years or above. 23.31% were diplomatic staff, 41.85% were expatriate workers in Nigeria, while 34.84% were foreign journalists. Figure 1 gives a pictorial chart of the respondents’ occupational distribution.

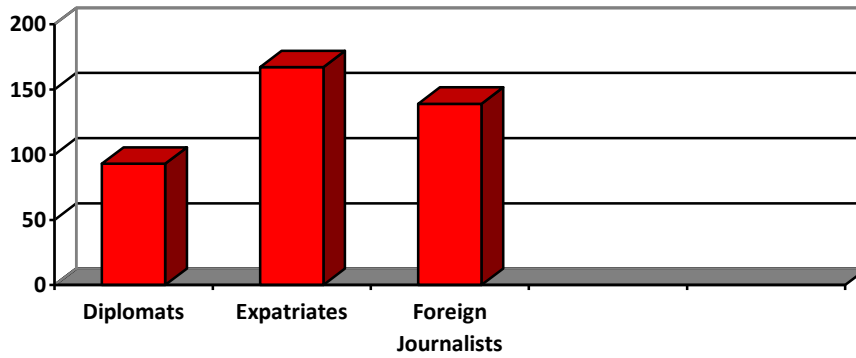


Fig. 1: The respondents' occupational distribution.

Table 2: Respondents' views on whether there is significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	117	29.32%
Agree	179	44.86%
Undecided	43	10.78%
Disagree	31	7.77%
Strongly Disagree	29	7.27%
Total	399	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Data on table 2 show that 29.32% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria. 44.86% equally agreed with that; 10.78% were undecided; 7.77% disagreed, while the remaining 7.27% strongly disagreed with this viewpoint. See figure 2 for a graphic chart of this result.

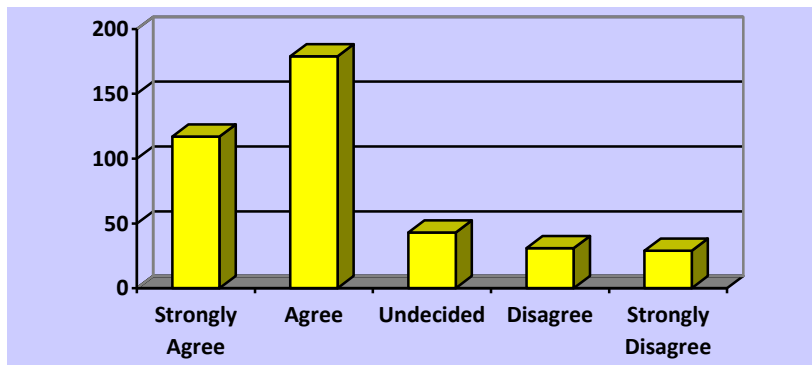


Fig. 2: A test of the correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria. Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether there is significant correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	163	40.85%
Agree	169	42.36%
Undecided	21	5.26%
Disagree	26	6.52%
Strongly Disagree	20	5.01%
Total	399	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Data displayed on table 3 reflect that 40.85% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is significant correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria. 42.36% equally agreed with that; 5.26% were undecided; 6.52% disagreed, while 5.01% strongly disagreed with this. See figure 3 for a graphic chart on this.

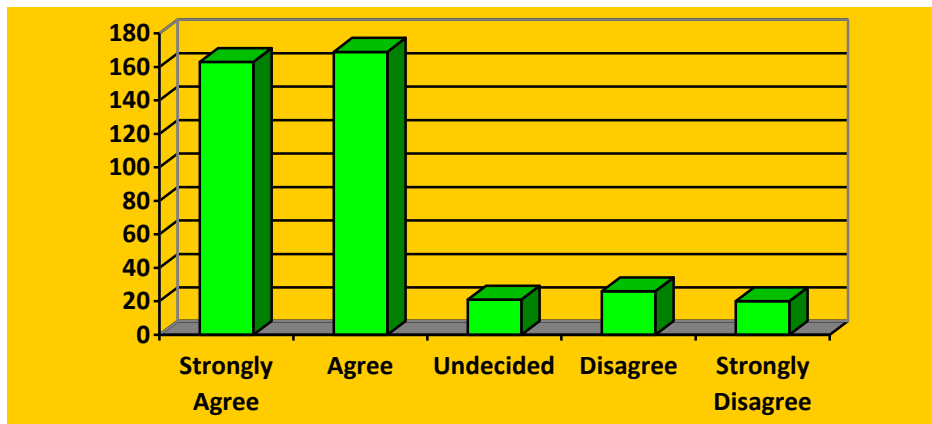


Fig. 3: A test of the correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria. Source: Field survey, 2024.

Table 4: Respondents’ views on whether public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country’s negative international image drift

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	144	36.09%
Agree	186	46.62%
Undecided	27	6.77%
Disagree	22	5.51%
Strongly Disagree	20	5.01%
Total	399	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Data on table 4 show that 36.09% of the respondents strongly agreed that public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country’s negative international image drift. 46.62% equally agreed with that; 6.77% were undecided; 5.51% disagreed, while 5.01% strongly disagreed with the point. See figure 4 for a pictorial chart on this result.

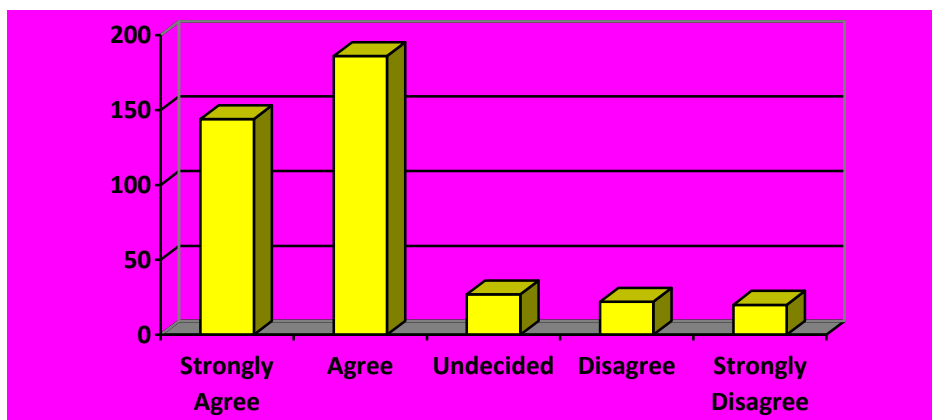


Fig. 4: Respondents’ views on whether public relations strategies would be significantly potent...

Table 5: On whether electoral frauds and violence also make majority of Nigerians to lose faith in the electoral process and democracy

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	179	44.86%
Agree	158	39.60%
Undecided	22	5.51%
Disagree	18	4.51%
Strongly Disagree	22	5.51%
Total	399	100%

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Data displayed on table 5 show that 44.86% of the respondents strongly agreed that electoral frauds and violence also make majority of Nigerians to lose faith in the electoral process and democracy. 39.60% equally agreed with that; 5.51% were undecided; 4.51% disagreed, while another 5.51% strongly disagreed with the point.

Test of Hypothesis One:

Ho: There is no significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.

Hi: There is significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.

Test Statistics = Spearman Correlation Coefficient (r_s)

Table 6: Statistical Test of Hypothesis 1

Options	Data 1	Data 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	D	d ²
Strongly Agree	117	179	4	5	-1	1
Agree	179	158	5	4	1	1
Undecided	43	22	3	1.5	1.5	2.25
Disagree	31	18	2	2	0	0
Strongly Disagree	29	22	1	1.5	-0.5	0.25

Adapted from tables 2 and 5. Source: Field Survey, 2024.

$$\sum d^2 = 1 + 1 + 0 + 2.25 + 0.25 = 4.50$$

$$\text{So, } r_s = \frac{1 - 4.50 \times \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = \frac{1 - (4.50 \times 4.50)}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

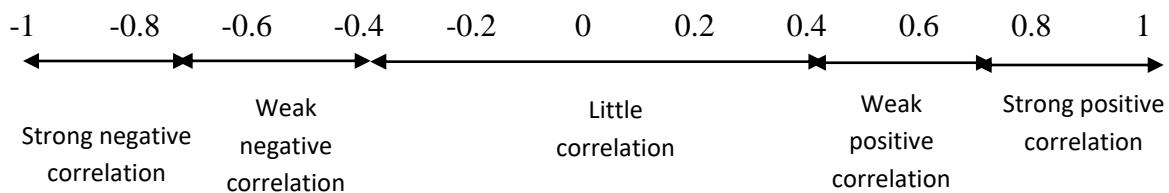
$$r_s = \frac{1 - 4.50 \times 4.50}{5(5^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{20.25}{120}$$

$$r_s = 1 - 0.17$$

$$r_s = 0.83$$

Fig. 6: Interpretation of the Result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient:



Decision

Since the result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient ($r_s = 0.83$) shows a strong positive correlation, we hereby reject the H_0 and accept the H_1 which says that “there is significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.”

Test of Hypothesis Two:

H_0 : There is no strong correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria.

H_1 : There is strong correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria.

Test Statistics = Spearman Correlation Coefficient (r_s)

Table 7: Statistical Test of Hypothesis 2

Options	Data 1	Data 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	D	d^2
Strongly Agree	163	179	4	5	-1	1
Agree	169	158	5	4	1	1
Undecided	21	22	2	1.5	0.5	0.25
Disagree	26	18	3	2	1	1
Strongly Disagree	20	22	1	1.5	-0.5	0.25

Adapted from tables 3 and 5. Source: Field Survey, 2024.

$$\sum d^2 = 1 + 1 + 0.25 + 1 + 0.25 = 3.50$$

$$\text{So, } r_s = \frac{1 - 3.50 \times \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = \frac{1 - (3.50 \times 3.50)}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = \frac{1 - 3.50 \times 3.50}{5(5^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{12.25}{120}$$

$$r_s = 1 - 0.102$$

$$r_s = 0.90$$

Decision

Since the result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient ($r_s = 0.90$) shows a strong positive correlation, we hereby reject the H_0 and accept the H_1 which says that “there is strong correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria.”

Test of Hypothesis Three:

Ho: Public relations strategies would not be significantly potent for arresting the country's negative international image drift.

Hi: Public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country's negative international image drift.

Test Statistics = Chi-Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{O - E}{E}$$

Expected Frequency = $\frac{\sum \text{Observed Frequency}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$

$$= \frac{144 + 186 + 27 + 22 + 20}{5} = 80$$

Degree of Freedom = 4. Hence, Critical Chi-Square at 5% Margin of Error = 9.49

$$\begin{aligned} X^2 &= \frac{(144-80)^2}{80} + \frac{(186-80)^2}{80} + \frac{(27-80)^2}{80} + \frac{(22-80)^2}{80} + \frac{(20-80)^2}{80} \\ &= 51.20 + 140.45 + 35.11 + 42.05 + 45 \\ &= 313.81 \end{aligned}$$

Decision

Since the calculated chi-square ($X^2_{\text{calculated}} = 313.81$, $p < 0.05$) is greater than the critical chi-square (9.49), we hereby reject the Ho and accept the Hi which says that "public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country's negative international image drift."

1.10 Summary of Results and their Implications

The results of the major findings of this study are hereby summarised as follows:

- i. There is significant correlation between pre- and post-election violence and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- ii. There is also a strong correlation between election rigging and the negative international image of Nigeria.
- iii. Public relations strategies would be significantly potent for arresting the country's negative international image drift.

The implications of the above result are that Nigeria and Nigerians could be unfairly treated by other nations, trade agreements and business transactions would be difficult, since trust would be eroded. It would also be difficult to attract foreign investors into the country, and this would worsen the unemployment situation as well as stunting economic development. Citizens of the country could find it difficult to secure visas to other countries (Nnabuko et al., 2013).

Apart from the above, the country's tourism could be adversely affected, because citizens of other countries might find it difficult travelling to a politically restive country. This again would have negative effect on employment generation capacity of the country. Worse still, when election rigging is the major cause of the political violence and mindless blood-sheds, other countries would see leaders and politicians from such a country as fraudulent people who could not be trusted and who have no values for the lives of the citizens they want to lead (Odigbo,

Enyam, Iroh & Dimkpa, 2022). All these and more, are the dire consequences of pre and post-election violence and election rigging. The cheery news, however, is that the effective application of public relations strategies could help immensely in correcting the negative international image liabilities accruing from these social problems.

1.11 Conclusion and Recommendations

Image is how people perceive an organisation, a person, country or something (Nwosu, 1996: 112). It should be everything to us, since it is a vital determiner of how others relate with us. Different people can have very different images of the same thing; so an image is whatever it is in people's minds (Jefkins, 1986). But the things we do and how we do them, most often direct the way people see us. That is why Nigeria and Nigerians have garnered a dose of negative image from electoral violence, election rigging and unending post-election bloody acrimonies.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. International public relations experts should be consulted for the effective management of Nigeria's negative image abroad.
- ii. Proactive public relations issues management strategies should also be employed to checkmate those things that give us the negative image in the first place.
- iii. Public relations research should also be used to track down those Internal and external elements that smear Nigeria's image internationally and nip such in their buds.
- iv. Public relations enlightenment campaigns should be used to educate Nigerian to learn to respect results of elections, to understand that in every election there must be winners and losers, and no matter which of these groups your candidate falls into, you must accept it in good faith and plan for the best tomorrow.
- v. Nigerian politicians should also be persuaded to learn to play by the rules and shun all forms of electoral frauds and malpractices, which most atimes are the off-shoot of post-election violence.

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