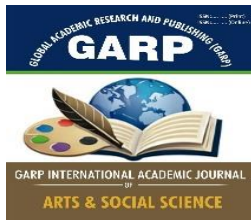


GARP INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



<https://garp.org.ng/gijass>

Vol.1, Issue 3, Pp.47-64; AUG., 2026

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY EFFECTIVENESS: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDER TRUST IN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IN EDO STATE IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

AIREN, Melody PhD. & NWAEJIKE, Godsgift Ihechiluru

Department of Mass Communication, Igbinedion University, Okada Edo State Nigeria

Email: airen.melody@iuokada.edu.ng & godsgift.nwaejike@iuokada.edu.ng

Corresponding Author: airen.melody@iuokada.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between public relations (PR) strategies and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the mediating role of stakeholder trust. The study was situated within nonprofit sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) advocacy and focused on BraveHeart Initiative for Youth and Women, Pathfinders Justice Initiative, and SOTHAWACA. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was used to obtain responses from 300 adult stakeholders who had encountered advocacy communication from the selected organizations, with 100 respondents allocated to each organizational context. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, correlation analysis and mediation analysis. The findings showed generally favourable perceptions of PR strategies and stakeholder trust. Public relations strategies were significantly associated with stakeholder trust ($\beta = .705$, $p < .001$), while stakeholder trust was significantly associated with advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .700$, $p < .001$). PR strategies also showed a significant direct relationship with advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .810$, $p < .001$). The reported indirect effect of PR strategies on advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust was .493, with a 95% confidence interval of (.413, .578). The findings suggest that nonprofit advocacy effectiveness is closely connected not only to communication activities but also to the trust established between advocacy organizations and their stakeholders. The study contributes to nonprofit public relations scholarship by positioning stakeholder trust as a relational mechanism linking PR strategies with advocacy outcomes in an under-researched Nigerian context. The reported mediation statistics should, however, be verified against the underlying statistical output before journal submission.

Keywords: public relations; nonprofit organizations; advocacy effectiveness; stakeholder trust; SGBV; Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO

Received Date: 31th Jul., 2026

Date Revised Received: 4th Aug., 2026

Accepted Date: 19th Aug., 2026

Published Date: 28th Aug. 2026

Citation: Airen, Melody and Nwaejike, Godsgift Ihechiluru (2026): Public Relations and Advocacy Effectiveness: The Role of Stakeholder Trust in Non-Profit Organization in Edo State, Nigeria: GARP INTER J. of Arts and Social Sci. Vol. 1 Issue 3 Pp.47-64; Aug. 2026

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations have become increasingly important actors in addressing social, political and community problems that require collective responses beyond the capacity of government and market institutions. In addition to providing social services, nonprofit organizations frequently engage in advocacy to influence public opinion, mobilize citizens, shape institutional practices and contribute to policy change. Advocacy therefore represents an important dimension of nonprofit activity, particularly where organizations seek to address structural inequalities, protect vulnerable populations and promote changes in social norms and public policy (Ward et al., 2023; MacIndoe et al., 2024; Brusseel et al., 2025).

Within this environment, public relations (PR) perform a function that extends beyond publicity and media exposure. Contemporary nonprofit communication increasingly involves relationship building, stakeholder engagement, organizational listening and the strategic use of digital and traditional communication channels to advance organizational missions (Suh et al., 2021; Klafke et al., 2021; Ihm, 2024). Nonprofit organizations use social media, community engagement, media relations, public awareness campaigns and other communication activities to create visibility around social issues and encourage members of the public and other stakeholders to support their causes (Li et al., 2022; Oksitycz & Mwadiwa, 2023; Sánchez-Torné et al., 2023). Consequently, public relations can be understood not merely as the transmission of advocacy messages but as a strategic process through which nonprofit organizations establish relationships with publics whose support may be necessary for achieving advocacy objectives.

However, communication exposure does not necessarily translate into advocacy effectiveness. An advocacy campaign may receive media attention, generate social-media interactions or reach large numbers of people without producing meaningful changes in stakeholder attitudes, participation or behaviour. This distinction is important because the ultimate purpose of advocacy is not simply to disseminate information but to influence individuals, institutions and wider social conditions (Ward et al., 2023; MacIndoe et al., 2024). Research on nonprofit advocacy has consequently begun to move beyond questions concerning the strategies organizations employ toward questions concerning the outcomes those strategies produce.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that advocacy effectiveness is a multidimensional concept.

Brusseel et al. (2025) identify five broad categories of advocacy outcomes in nonprofit research: policy-cycle outcomes, organizational-capacity outcomes, constituent outcomes, public-salience outcomes and societal outcomes. Their scoping review also reveals substantial inconsistency in the indicators used to evaluate advocacy effectiveness and a tendency for studies to rely on narrow or perceptual measures. Similarly, Ward et al. (2023), in a systematic review of nonprofit advocacy research, identify methodological limitations in the existing literature, including the need for stronger attention to advocacy outcomes rather than focusing predominantly on organizational strategies and activities. These observations suggest that the effectiveness of nonprofit advocacy cannot adequately be understood through indicators such as media visibility or message exposure alone.

An important but comparatively underexamined factor in this relationship is stakeholder trust. Nonprofit organizations depend substantially on public confidence because their ability to mobilize support, attract participation and influence stakeholders is closely associated with perceptions of organizational credibility and legitimacy. Trust can affect whether stakeholders regard an organization's information as reliable, whether they believe its motives are legitimate and whether they are willing to support its activities (Chapman et al., 2021; Shahid et al., 2023). In the nonprofit context, trust is particularly important because organizations frequently operate on the basis of social missions rather than commercial exchange, making relationships with communities, donors, beneficiaries, policymakers, volunteers and other stakeholders central to organizational sustainability and effectiveness.

Evidence from nonprofit research demonstrates the importance of trust in shaping relationships between organizations and their publics. Chapman et al. (2021), using longitudinal multinational data covering 31 countries and 294,176 observations, examined public trust in nonprofits and demonstrated the importance of trust as a significant feature of the nonprofit environment. Similarly, research on nonprofit reputational signals indicates that organizational characteristics can influence stakeholder trust and subsequent supportive intentions, suggesting that trust may serve as an important mechanism through which organizational communication and reputation affect stakeholder responses (Shahid et al., 2023). These findings provide a basis for examining whether trust may similarly connect nonprofit public-relations activities with advocacy outcomes.

The importance of trust also becomes clearer when public relations is conceptualized as a relationship-management function. Rather than treating publics merely as passive recipients of organizational information, relationship-oriented public relations emphasize interaction, responsiveness and mutually beneficial relationships. Recent nonprofit research supports this perspective. Fu et al. (2024), for example, demonstrate the importance of organizational listening in nonprofit stakeholder engagement and argue that meaningful engagement requires organizations to attend to stakeholder perspectives rather than simply communicate organizational messages. Similarly, research on nonprofit social-media communication demonstrates that dialogic and interactive communication can facilitate stakeholder engagement and relationship building (Ihm, 2022, 2023; Oksiutycz & Mwadiwa, 2023).

This shift from one-way communication toward relational communication is particularly relevant to advocacy. Stakeholders who trust an organization may be more receptive to its advocacy messages and more willing to participate in activities supporting the advocated cause. Conversely, organizations whose communication is perceived as unreliable, opaque or disconnected from stakeholder interests may struggle to convert visibility into sustained support. Recent research on nonprofit communication supports the importance of message characteristics, responsiveness, transparency and dialogue in shaping stakeholder responses (Li et al., 2022; Sánchez-Torné et al., 2023; Fu et al., 2024). Thus, stakeholder trust may represent more than an outcome of successful public relations; it may constitute a mechanism through which PR contributes to advocacy effectiveness.

The relationship between advocacy strategy and stakeholder response has also received increasing empirical attention. Brusseel et al. (2025), for example, experimentally examined how nonprofit advocacy strategies influence policymakers' willingness to act. Their findings demonstrate that characteristics of advocacy strategies can affect important stakeholder responses. MacIndoe et al. (2024) similarly examined the tactical repertoires of nonprofit advocacy organizations and the factors associated with perceived advocacy effectiveness. These studies reinforce the importance of examining the relationship between advocacy strategies and outcomes. Nevertheless, they do not fully explain whether

stakeholder trust helps translate public-relations strategies into advocacy effectiveness.

Digital communication has further transformed the environment in which nonprofit advocacy takes place. Nonprofit organizations increasingly use social-media platforms to distribute advocacy messages, mobilize supporters, encourage interaction and create opportunities for stakeholders to participate in social-change activities (Ihm, 2022, 2023, 2024). Research examining nonprofit Facebook communication, for example, has shown that emotional characteristics of messages can influence public engagement (Li et al., 2022), while studies of nonprofit digital strategy demonstrate the importance of content characteristics, dialogic engagement and strategic communication in shaping audience responses (Klafke et al., 2021; Sánchez-Torné et al., 2023; Carrillo-Durán et al., 2023). However, digital engagement should not automatically be equated with advocacy effectiveness. Likes, comments, shares and other forms of online interaction indicate communication engagement but do not necessarily demonstrate sustained support, behavioural action or broader advocacy outcomes.

The distinction between communication engagement and advocacy effectiveness is particularly important in campaigns addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). SGBV advocacy requires nonprofit organizations to communicate sensitive issues, challenge harmful social norms, encourage reporting and help communities understand violence as a social, legal and institutional problem. Communication strategies in this context therefore need to do more than generate awareness; they must establish credibility, encourage dialogue and create sufficient confidence for stakeholders to support appropriate responses.

The Nigerian context makes this issue particularly significant. Nigeria's National Communication Strategy on Ending All Forms of Gender-Based Violence recognizes communication as an important component of efforts to prevent and respond to GBV and emphasizes the need for communication approaches that are appropriate to different audiences and local contexts (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & UNFPA, 2022). The strategy reflects the recognition that changing attitudes and behaviours surrounding GBV requires coordinated communication involving government institutions, civil-society organizations, communities and other stakeholders.

Research in Nigeria also provides evidence that nonprofit organizations use a variety of communication

channels in GBV advocacy. Sanusi (2024), for example, found that NGOs involved in GBV interventions employed media campaigns, community outreach, workshops, seminars, public enlightenment, influencers, opinion leaders and community leaders as communication channels. This demonstrates the breadth of communication strategies available to Nigerian nonprofit organizations while also highlighting the importance of examining whether such strategies produce meaningful advocacy outcomes.

Edo State provides an appropriate context for investigating these relationships because of the presence of nonprofit organizations and institutional stakeholders involved in GBV prevention, awareness and advocacy. The state has established mechanisms for coordinating responses to gender-based violence and has engaged government institutions, NGOs and development partners in gender-related advocacy and stakeholder activities. Recent state-level initiatives have included public sensitisation and stakeholder mobilisation around the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign (Edo State Government, 2024a). The state government has also convened stakeholders, including NGOs and development partners, to address gender equality and women's empowerment (Edo State Government, 2024b).

Within this environment, selected nonprofit organizations provide useful empirical settings for examining the relationship between PR, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness. BraveHeart Initiative for Youth and Women operates in Edo State and identifies SGBV intervention, advocacy, community engagement, public education and communication with critical actors among its activities (BraveHeart Initiative for Youth & Women, n.d.). Pathfinders Justice Initiative (PJI) has also undertaken advocacy and awareness activities relating to sexual violence and trafficking, including public campaigns, community outreach, training and media-based communication (Pathfinders Justice Initiative, n.d.). SOTHAWACA is identified by the Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues as an NGO supporting the counselling unit of the Vivian Sexual Assault Referral Centre, placing it within the state's institutional response to sexual and gender-based violence (Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of research on nonprofit communication, stakeholder engagement and

advocacy, an important problem remains unresolved. The use of public-relations strategies does not automatically guarantee advocacy effectiveness. Nonprofit organizations may achieve communication visibility without achieving corresponding improvements in stakeholder support, participation or broader advocacy outcomes.

Existing research has examined nonprofit communication strategies and stakeholder engagement (Suh et al., 2021; Ihm, 2024; Fu et al., 2024), while another body of research has examined nonprofit advocacy strategies and their effectiveness (Ward et al., 2023; MacIndoe et al., 2024; Brusseel et al., 2025). However, these strands of research have not sufficiently explained the relational mechanism through which public-relations strategies may contribute to advocacy outcomes.

More specifically, insufficient empirical attention has been paid to stakeholder trust as a potential mediating mechanism between nonprofit PR strategies and advocacy effectiveness. This omission is important because communication strategies may influence advocacy outcomes partly through their ability to establish perceptions of credibility, integrity, competence and stakeholder orientation. Without such trust, increased communication exposure may not translate into meaningful support or action.

The problem is particularly relevant to SGBV advocacy, where nonprofit organizations communicate highly sensitive issues and seek to influence attitudes, behaviours and institutional responses. In such circumstances, stakeholders' confidence in the organization may determine whether advocacy messages are accepted, shared and acted upon. Yet empirical evidence linking PR strategies, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness within Nigerian nonprofit organizations remains limited.

First, existing scholarship on nonprofit PR and advocacy has developed largely along separate lines. Studies have examined nonprofit external communication and public relations (Suh et al., 2021), social-media engagement (Klafke et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022), organizational listening and stakeholder engagement (Fu et al., 2024), and advocacy tactics and effectiveness (Ward et al., 2023; MacIndoe et al., 2024; Brusseel et al., 2025). However, comparatively little empirical research integrates these perspectives into a model linking PR strategies, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness.

Second, the measurement of advocacy effectiveness remains problematic.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that advocacy effectiveness encompasses multiple possible outcomes rather than a single indicator (Brusseel et al., 2025). Existing studies have nevertheless frequently relied on narrow or perceptual measures, creating an opportunity for research that examines advocacy effectiveness through multiple stakeholder-observable dimensions.

Third, although stakeholder trust has been examined in nonprofit research, its role as a mediating mechanism between communication strategy and advocacy outcomes remains insufficiently developed. Existing evidence demonstrates relationships between organizational signals, trust and supportive intentions (Shahid et al., 2023), while research on nonprofit communication emphasizes the importance of listening, responsiveness and stakeholder relationships (Fu et al., 2024). What remains less clear is whether trust explains how PR strategies contribute to advocacy effectiveness.

Fourth, there is a contextual gap. A substantial proportion of recent empirical research on nonprofit communication and advocacy effectiveness originates outside Nigeria (Ihm, 2024; Brusseel et al., 2025). Although Nigerian research has examined advocacy organizations and communication in specific policy and social contexts (Resnick et al., 2022; Sanusi, 2024), empirical research examining the proposed PR-trust-advocacy relationship among nonprofit organizations in Edo State remains limited.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness and investigates the mediating role of stakeholder trust among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Examine the relationship between public relations strategies and stakeholder trust among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria.
2. Examine the relationship between stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria.
3. Determine the relationship between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria.

4. Determine the mediating role of stakeholder trust in the relationship between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between public relations strategies and stakeholder trust among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria?
2. What relationship exists between stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria?
3. What relationship exists between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria?
4. To what extent does stakeholder trust mediate the relationship between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria?

Contribution of the Study

The study is expected to make theoretical, empirical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it brings together public-relations and relationship-management perspectives with nonprofit advocacy research by positioning stakeholder trust as a possible mechanism linking communication strategies to advocacy outcomes. Empirically, it extends the evidence base on nonprofit advocacy into the Nigerian context and provides evidence from Edo State, where SGBV advocacy involves interaction among nonprofit organizations, government institutions, communities and other stakeholders (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & UNFPA, 2022; Edo State Government, 2024a, 2024b). Methodologically, the study responds to concerns about narrow measures of advocacy effectiveness by examining multiple stakeholder-level outcomes rather than relying exclusively on campaign visibility or a single overall effectiveness measure (Ward et al., 2023; Brusseel et al., 2025).

Practically, the study may help nonprofit organizations understand whether investment in communication should be evaluated primarily in terms of reach and visibility or also in terms of its capacity to establish stakeholder trust and encourage advocacy-related responses. Such evidence may be particularly valuable for organizations addressing SGBV, where effective communication requires credibility, sensitivity,

community engagement and sustained stakeholder relationships.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Public Relations Strategies in Nonprofit Organizations

Public relations in nonprofit organizations have increasingly moved beyond the traditional conception of communication as publicity or information dissemination. Nonprofit organizations operate within complex stakeholder environments in which beneficiaries, community members, donors, volunteers, government institutions, policymakers, journalists, development partners and other actors may have different expectations of the organization. Consequently, effective public relations involve managing communication and relationships across multiple stakeholder groups in ways that support organizational legitimacy, participation and mission achievement (Suh et al., 2021; Meyer & Barker, 2022).

This multidimensional stakeholder environment makes public relations particularly significant for nonprofit organizations. Recent research similarly shows that nonprofit organizations manage stakeholder relationships through multiple communication channels and that effective engagement increasingly requires integrated communication and organizational listening (Suh et al., 2021; Fu et al., 2024).

The implication is that nonprofit PR should not be evaluated simply by the quantity of communication produced. The more important issue is what the communication enables the organization to accomplish in its relationships with stakeholders. Communication may provide information, but it can also create opportunities for dialogue, feedback, participation and relationship development. A 2024 systematic review of stakeholder and communication management in NGOs similarly identifies communication management as an important factor in stakeholder engagement and the satisfaction of stakeholder needs, while calling for more strategic and integrated approaches to communication management (Sánchez-Torné et al., 2024).

Strategic communication

Strategic communication refers to the deliberate planning and coordination of organizational messages around defined goals and target publics. For nonprofit organizations, strategic communication involves aligning communication activities with organizational

missions and advocacy objectives rather than treating individual communication activities as isolated events (Suh et al., 2021; Meyer & Barker, 2022). In advocacy campaigns, strategic communication is particularly important because different stakeholders may require different forms of information and persuasion. A message designed for policymakers may differ from one designed for community members, journalists or young people. Strategic PR therefore involves identifying relevant publics, determining appropriate messages and selecting communication channels capable of reaching those publics.

Media relations

Media relations involve the organization's interaction with journalists, news organizations and other media actors to communicate issues of public interest. For nonprofit organizations, media relations can increase the visibility of social problems and provide organizations with opportunities to influence public discussion.

However, visibility should not be confused with effectiveness. Thus, media relations constitute a potential PR strategy through which advocacy messages reach broader publics, but their contribution to advocacy effectiveness may depend on how stakeholders perceive both the message and the organization behind it.

Digital and social-media communication

Digital communication has substantially changed nonprofit public relations. Social-media platforms provide organizations with relatively inexpensive channels for distributing information, interacting with stakeholders and mobilizing supporters. Research has shown that nonprofit organizations use social media not simply to publish information but also to facilitate networks, interaction and social-change participation (Ihm, 2022, 2023, 2024). Nevertheless, digital visibility presents a measurement problem. Likes, comments, shares and impressions are communication indicators, but they do not necessarily represent advocacy outcomes. An individual may interact with an advocacy post without becoming more supportive of the cause or taking any action.

Community relations

Community relations are particularly relevant to nonprofit advocacy because many social problems are experienced at the community level. Community-based communication may involve sensitisation programmes, town-hall meetings, workshops, community dialogues and engagement with traditional, religious and community leaders. Such communication

can provide nonprofits with opportunities to adapt advocacy messages to local realities and receive direct feedback from stakeholders. This is particularly important in SGBV advocacy, where attitudes toward gender, violence, reporting and intervention can vary across communities.

Stakeholder dialogue and organizational listening

The relational dimension of PR is perhaps most clearly represented by stakeholder dialogue and organizational listening. Rather than treating stakeholders as passive recipients of organizational messages, dialogic communication provides opportunities for stakeholders to express concerns, provide feedback and influence communication or organizational decisions. Fu et al. (2024) distinguish organizational listening from conventional stakeholder management, emphasizing that effective nonprofit engagement requires organizations to listen to stakeholders and incorporate relevant perspectives into organizational processes. This represents an important development in nonprofit communication research because it shifts the emphasis from communicating to stakeholders toward communicating with stakeholders.

Stakeholder Trust

Stakeholder trust refers to the willingness of stakeholders to place confidence in an organization, its information, intentions and conduct. In the nonprofit environment, trust is particularly important because organizations depend on stakeholders who may provide resources, participate in programmes, support advocacy campaigns or accept organizational claims about social problems. Empirical evidence demonstrates that trust is an important feature of nonprofit relationships. Chapman et al. (2021), using extensive multinational data, examined public trust in nonprofits across 31 countries and demonstrated that trust constitutes an important characteristic of the nonprofit environment. More recent research continues to emphasize trust as an important relational resource for nonprofit organizations.

A recent study of a small nonprofit organization found that stakeholders associated trust with the organization's ability to demonstrate social value, although it also identified the vulnerability created when trust becomes heavily associated with a single organizational actor (Sánchez-Torné et al., 2024).

Advocacy in Nonprofit Organizations

Advocacy refers broadly to organized efforts to influence public attitudes, institutional decisions,

policies, practices or social conditions in support of a particular cause. Within nonprofit organizations, advocacy allows organizations to address not only the immediate consequences of social problems but also the structural conditions that contribute to them. Nonprofit advocacy can involve direct communication with policymakers, public education, media advocacy, community mobilization, coalition building, campaigns, research dissemination and engagement with influential stakeholders (Ward et al., 2023; MacIndoe et al., 2024). The diversity of these activities means that advocacy should not be understood as a single communication technique.

Ward et al. (2023), in a systematic review of 264 scholarly articles on nonprofit advocacy, demonstrate the breadth of the field while also identifying continuing gaps in understanding the processes and outcomes through which nonprofit organizations influence policymaking and policy change.

Advocacy Effectiveness

Advocacy effectiveness concerns the extent to which advocacy activities achieve their intended outcomes. However, the concept is considerably more complex than simply determining whether an organization conducted a campaign. Recent scholarship provides particularly strong evidence for this position. Brusseel et al. (2025) identify five major categories through which nonprofit policy advocacy effectiveness has been conceptualized: policy-cycle outcomes, organizational-capacity outcomes, constituent outcomes, public-salience outcomes and societal outcomes. Their review further finds that the indicators used to measure these outcomes are diverse and rarely replicated consistently across studies. More importantly, the authors identify a dominant tendency toward unidimensional and perceptual assessments of advocacy effectiveness.

This finding has an important implication for the present study. If advocacy effectiveness is multidimensional, then measuring it simply by asking whether a campaign was "successful" would provide insufficient evidence. Similarly, communication metrics such as social-media reach or media coverage cannot by themselves establish advocacy effectiveness.

Public awareness or salience

An advocacy campaign can be effective when it increases awareness and public attention toward an issue. In SGBV advocacy, this may involve greater recognition of the existence, consequences or seriousness of sexual and gender-based violence.

Stakeholder support

Advocacy effectiveness may also be reflected in whether stakeholders become more supportive of the cause promoted by the organization. Increased support represents a step beyond simple awareness because it indicates attitudinal movement toward the advocated issue.

Advocacy-related action and participation

The strongest stakeholder-level evidence may occur when communication encourages individuals to act. Such action may include participating in advocacy activities, sharing information, supporting campaigns, volunteering, encouraging others or engaging relevant institutions.

Perceived influence

Stakeholders may also judge whether an organization is capable of influencing community leaders, institutions and decision-makers. Although stakeholders cannot necessarily verify actual policy change, perceived influence remains relevant because it reflects whether advocacy is regarded as consequential within the stakeholder environment.

Nonprofit Organizations and SGBV Advocacy

The nonprofit sector provides an important institutional environment for advocacy because nonprofit organizations frequently address social issues that require behavioural, cultural and policy change. Unlike commercial organizations, whose communication may be primarily directed toward market exchange, nonprofit organizations often communicate in pursuit of public or social missions. SGBV advocacy provides a particularly appropriate context because the problem cannot be addressed solely through service delivery. Prevention and response require public awareness, community engagement, and institutional cooperation, changes in social attitudes and, in many cases, policy and legal interventions.

This makes communication and stakeholder relationships central to SGBV advocacy. Organizations must communicate sensitive issues in ways that are credible, culturally appropriate and capable of encouraging participation without reinforcing stigma or misinformation.

The Nigerian National Communication Strategy on Ending All Forms of Gender-Based Violence similarly recognizes communication as a central component of GBV prevention and response and emphasizes the importance of communication approaches that respond to different audiences and contexts (Federal

Ministry of Women Affairs & UNFPA, 2022). Consequently, SGBV advocacy provides a useful setting for examining whether PR strategies produce advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust.

Theoretical Framework

Relationship Management Theory

This study is anchored in Relationship Management Theory (RMT), which conceptualizes public relations as a strategic process through which organizations establish and maintain relationships with their publics. The theory shifts the emphasis of public relations from communication outputs alone toward the quality and consequences of organization–public relationships (Ledingham, 2021).

The theory is particularly appropriate for nonprofit organizations because their ability to achieve social and advocacy objectives depends substantially on relationships with stakeholders, including community members, beneficiaries, policymakers, government institutions, media organizations and other partners. In this context, communication is not simply a means of disseminating advocacy messages; it is also a mechanism for developing relationships capable of generating stakeholder support.

Trust is one of the central dimensions of organization–public relationship quality. A recent meta-analysis of 67 studies involving more than 30,000 participants found significant relationships between communication and engagement practices, organization–public relationship dimensions and consequential outcomes, including advocacy (Ma et al., 2023). The study identified trust, satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality as important relationship dimensions, while transparency, authenticity, interactivity and two-way communication emerged among relevant antecedents.

This provides a strong theoretical basis for the present study. Public-relations strategies such as strategic communication, media relations, digital communication, community engagement and stakeholder dialogue may contribute to stakeholder trust when they are perceived as credible, transparent, responsive and stakeholder-oriented. In turn, trusted nonprofit organizations may be better positioned to obtain stakeholder support and participation in advocacy activities.

The theoretical relationship can therefore be expressed as:

Public Relations Strategies → Stakeholder Trust → Advocacy Effectiveness

The theory also permits a direct relationship between PR strategies and advocacy effectiveness because communication activities may influence awareness, participation and support without necessarily operating entirely through trust. The present study consequently extends the application of Relationship Management Theory by examining stakeholder trust as a potential mediating mechanism between nonprofit public-relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness. This is particularly relevant to SGBV advocacy, where organizations must establish credibility and confidence among stakeholders while communicating sensitive social issues and encouraging collective responses.

Methodology

The methodology is generally appropriate for the study because the **quantitative cross-sectional survey design** is suitable for examining the relationships among public relations strategies, stakeholder trust, and advocacy effectiveness.

However, the methodology should be strengthened by clearly explaining why Edo State and the three selected organisations Braveheart Initiative for Youth and Women, Pathfinders Justice Initiative, and SOTHAWACA were purposively selected. The criteria used for selecting the organisations should also be stated explicitly. The **population and sampling procedures** are reasonably stated, but the definition of “adult stakeholders” should be made more precise. Since the exact number of eligible stakeholders may not be known, the study should clearly distinguish between the target and accessible populations. The proposed sample of about 300 respondents is potentially adequate, but it should be supported by an appropriate **statistical power analysis**, particularly because the study intends to test a mediation model. The basis for distributing respondents among the three organisations should also be clearly indicated.

The **research instrument section is currently incomplete**. Since the study focuses on public relations strategies, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness, the questionnaire should clearly contain sections measuring each of these constructs, in addition to advocacy exposure. The methodology should state the measurement scale, sources or basis for the questionnaire items, and how the constructs will be scored. Evidence of **content validity and reliability**, preferably through expert review and pilot testing with Cronbach's alpha, should also be included.

Finally, the methodology should include the **data collection procedure, ethical considerations and data analysis techniques**. Descriptive statistics can be used

to summarize respondents' characteristics and major variables, while correlation and regression techniques can examine the relationships among the variables. For the proposed mediation, a **bootstrapping procedure for testing the indirect effect of public relations strategies on advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust** would be appropriate. The methodology should also maintain consistent tense throughout; if the study is already completed, past tense should be used consistently. Overall, the methodology provides a good foundation but requires these additions to be considered complete and academically robust.

Section B: Public Relations Strategies

Items will measure respondents' perceptions of: strategic communication; media relations; digital communication; community relations; and stakeholder dialogue.

Section C: Stakeholder Trust

Items assessed: credibility; integrity; competence; and benevolence/stakeholder orientation.

Section D: Advocacy Effectiveness

Items will measure: public awareness/salience; stakeholder support; advocacy-related action/participation; and perceived influence. The substantive items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The measures were adapted from relevant public-relations, nonprofit, stakeholder-trust and advocacy literature and subsequently subjected to validity and reliability assessment.

Validity of the Instrument

To establish content validity, the questionnaire were reviewed by experts in public relations, mass communication and research methodology. The reviewers assessed whether the items adequately represent the three principal constructs and whether the wording is clear and appropriate to the Edo State nonprofit advocacy context. A pilot test was subsequently conducted with approximately 30–50 eligible respondents who will not form part of the final study sample. Feedbacks from the pilot were used to identify ambiguous, repetitive or poorly performing items.

Reliability

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability coefficients will be calculated separately for the principal constructs. Items that substantially weaken the reliability or conceptual

coherence of a construct were reviewed before the final analysis.

Data Collection

The researcher will seek appropriate permission from the selected organizations before commencing data collection. Questionnaires were administered to eligible respondents through appropriate online and/or face-to-face channels. Participation will be voluntary and respondents provided informed consent.

Data Analysis

The data will first be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Correlation analysis will then be used to examine the associations among the principal constructs. To test the hypothesized relationships and mediation effect, the study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is appropriate for models involving multiple latent constructs and simultaneous direct and indirect relationships and has been applied in nonprofit research involving perceived effectiveness and multiple organizational constructs.

The hypotheses will be tested at the *0.05* level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Organization

Organization	Frequency	Percentage (%)
BraveHeart Initiative	100	33.3
Pathfinders Justice Initiative	100	33.3
SOTHAWACA	100	33.3
Total	300	100.0

The sample was evenly distributed across the three selected nonprofit organizations, with each contributing 100 respondents (33.3%). This provides balanced representation of the three organizational contexts.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–24	61	20.3
25–34	106	35.3
35–44	61	20.3
45–54	42	14.0
55+	30	10.0
Total	300	100.0

Respondents aged 25–34 constituted the largest age group (35.3%), while those aged 55 years and above constituted the smallest group (10.0%). Overall, the sample represents respondents across the major adult age categories.

Participation will be voluntary and based on informed consent. Respondents will be informed about the purpose of the study, their right to decline participation and their right to discontinue participation. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the research process, and collected data were used strictly for academic purposes. Because the research concerns SGBV advocacy, the study will avoid unnecessary questions concerning participants' personal experiences of violence and used appropriate, non-stigmatizing language.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

This section presents the findings of the study on Public Relations and Advocacy Effectiveness: The Role of Stakeholder Trust in Nonprofit Organizations in Edo State, Nigeria. The analysis is based on 300 respondents who had encountered advocacy activities of the three selected nonprofit organizations: BraveHeart Initiative, Pathfinders Justice Initiative and SOTHAWACA. Each organization contributed 100 respondents, representing 33.3% of the sample. The findings are presented using frequencies, percentages, Likert-scale response distributions, means and standard deviations. Correlation, direct-effect and mediation analyses are subsequently used to examine the relationships proposed in the study.

Table 3: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	168	56.0
Male	126	42.0
Prefer not to say	6	2.0
Total	300	100.0

Female respondents constituted 56.0% of the sample, compared with 42.0% male respondents, while 2.0% preferred not to disclose their sex.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's degree/HND	154	51.3
NCE/OND/Diploma	64	21.3
Postgraduate degree	63	21.0
Secondary education	19	6.3
Total	300	100.0

Respondents with bachelor's degrees or HNDs formed the largest educational category (51.3%). Postgraduate degree holders accounted for 21.0%, while 6.3% had secondary education as their highest qualification.

Table 5: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Civil/Public servant	74	24.7
Student	63	21.0
Self-employed	62	20.7
Private-sector employee	47	15.7
NGO/CSO worker	30	10.0
Other	24	8.0
Total	300	100.0

Civil/public servants constituted the largest occupational category (24.7%), followed by students (21.0%) and self-employed respondents (20.7%). The sample therefore included respondents from varied occupational backgrounds.

Table 6: Distribution by Senatorial District

Senatorial District	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Edo South	130	43.3
Edo North	96	32.0
Edo Central	74	24.7
Total	300	100.0

Edo South recorded the highest representation (43.3%), followed by Edo North (32.0%) and Edo Central (24.7%). All three senatorial districts were represented.

Exposure to Advocacy Communication

Table 7: Frequency of Exposure to Advocacy Communication

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once	27	9.0
Occasionally	85	28.3
Several times	114	38.0
Frequently	49	16.3
Very frequently	25	8.3
Total	300	100.0

The largest proportion of respondents (38.0%) reported encountering advocacy communication several times. A further 16.3% reported frequent exposure and 8.3% very frequent exposure. Thus, 62.6% had encountered the advocacy communication several times.

Public Relations Strategies:**Table 8: Responses to Public Relations Strategy Items**

Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	SD
PRS1	1 (0.3)	13 (4.3)	111 (37.0)	120 (40.0)	55 (18.3)	3.72	0.82
PRS2	3 (1.0)	23 (7.7)	99 (33.0)	124 (41.3)	51 (17.0)	3.66	0.88
PRS3	0 (0.0)	17 (5.7)	97 (32.3)	132 (44.0)	54 (18.0)	3.74	0.82
PRS4	1 (0.3)	18 (6.0)	92 (30.7)	129 (43.0)	60 (20.0)	3.76	0.85
PRS5	1 (0.3)	30 (10.0)	94 (31.3)	121 (40.3)	54 (18.0)	3.66	0.90
PRS6	1 (0.3)	20 (6.7)	104 (34.7)	124 (41.3)	51 (17.0)	3.68	0.84
PRS7	1 (0.3)	19 (6.3)	101 (33.7)	137 (45.7)	42 (14.0)	3.67	0.81
PRS8	1 (0.3)	21 (7.0)	85 (28.3)	133 (44.3)	60 (20.0)	3.77	0.86
PRS9	0 (0.0)	18 (6.0)	100 (33.3)	128 (42.7)	54 (18.0)	3.73	0.83
PRS10	1 (0.3)	17 (5.7)	98 (32.7)	124 (41.3)	60 (20.0)	3.75	0.85
PRS11	0 (0.0)	25 (8.3)	97 (32.3)	120 (40.0)	58 (19.3)	3.70	0.87
PRS12	0 (0.0)	25 (8.3)	92 (30.7)	134 (44.7)	49 (16.3)	3.69	0.84
PRS13	0 (0.0)	18 (6.0)	87 (29.0)	140 (46.7)	55 (18.3)	3.77	0.81
PRS14	0 (0.0)	21 (7.0)	82 (27.3)	136 (45.3)	61 (20.3)	3.79	0.85
PRS15	0 (0.0)	23 (7.7)	91 (30.3)	128 (42.7)	58 (19.3)	3.74	0.86

Source: Field findings.

The results indicate generally favourable perceptions of the organizations' public relations strategies, with mean scores ranging from 3.66 to 3.79. PRS14 recorded the highest mean (3.79), while PRS2 and PRS5 recorded the lowest (3.66). The predominance of Agree and Strongly Agree responses across the items indicates that respondents generally viewed the organizations' communication, media, digital, community and stakeholder-engagement practices positively.

Stakeholder Trust**Table 9: Responses to Stakeholder Trust Items**

Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	SD
ST1	0 (0.0)	14 (4.7)	98 (32.7)	123 (41.0)	65 (21.7)	3.80	0.83
ST2	2 (0.7)	15 (5.0)	105 (35.0)	131 (43.7)	47 (15.7)	3.69	0.82
ST3	1 (0.3)	20 (6.7)	100 (33.3)	112 (37.3)	67 (22.3)	3.75	0.89
ST4	0 (0.0)	19 (6.3)	102 (34.0)	123 (41.0)	56 (18.7)	3.72	0.84
ST5	1 (0.3)	21 (7.0)	89 (29.7)	130 (43.3)	59 (19.7)	3.75	0.86
ST6	3 (1.0)	14 (4.7)	82 (27.3)	136 (45.3)	65 (21.7)	3.82	0.86
ST7	2 (0.7)	19 (6.3)	95 (31.7)	121 (40.3)	63 (21.0)	3.75	0.88
ST8	1 (0.3)	19 (6.3)	95 (31.7)	135 (45.0)	50 (16.7)	3.71	0.83
ST9	0 (0.0)	23 (7.7)	85 (28.3)	125 (41.7)	67 (22.3)	3.79	0.88
ST10	2 (0.7)	14 (4.7)	82 (27.3)	152 (50.7)	50 (16.7)	3.78	0.80
ST11	0 (0.0)	24 (8.0)	92 (30.7)	122 (40.7)	62 (20.7)	3.74	0.88
ST12	0 (0.0)	17 (5.7)	91 (30.3)	137 (45.7)	55 (18.3)	3.77	0.81

Source: Field findings.

Stakeholder trust also received generally favourable assessments, with item means ranging from 3.69 to 3.82. ST6 recorded the highest mean (3.82), followed by ST9 (3.79) and ST10 (3.78). The results suggest that respondents generally regarded the organizations as reliable, credible, competent and concerned about stakeholders.

Advocacy Effectiveness

Table 10: Responses to Advocacy Effectiveness Items

Item	SD n (%)	D n (%)	N n (%)	A n (%)	SA n (%)	Mean	SD
AE1	7 (2.3)	22 (7.3)	100 (33.3)	106 (35.3)	65 (21.7)	3.67	0.97
AE2	2 (0.7)	30 (10.0)	104 (34.7)	111 (37.0)	53 (17.7)	3.61	0.91
AE3	0 (0.0)	34 (11.3)	93 (31.0)	120 (40.0)	53 (17.7)	3.64	0.90
AE4	3 (1.0)	27 (9.0)	92 (30.7)	109 (36.3)	69 (23.0)	3.71	0.95
AE5	2 (0.7)	28 (9.3)	103 (34.3)	116 (38.7)	51 (17.0)	3.62	0.90
AE6	2 (0.7)	29 (9.7)	95 (31.7)	121 (40.3)	53 (17.7)	3.65	0.90
AE7	8 (2.7)	21 (7.0)	104 (34.7)	116 (38.7)	51 (17.0)	3.60	0.94
AE8	2 (0.7)	24 (8.0)	110 (36.7)	107 (35.7)	57 (19.0)	3.64	0.90
AE9	4 (1.3)	28 (9.3)	98 (32.7)	115 (38.3)	55 (18.3)	3.63	0.93
AE10	3 (1.0)	22 (7.3)	89 (29.7)	139 (46.3)	47 (15.7)	3.68	0.86
AE11	1 (0.3)	36 (12.0)	100 (33.3)	104 (34.7)	59 (19.7)	3.61	0.95
AE12	2 (0.7)	24 (8.0)	109 (36.3)	112 (37.3)	53 (17.7)	3.63	0.89

Source: Field findings.

The advocacy-effectiveness items recorded mean scores between 3.60 and 3.71. AE4 had the highest mean (3.71), while AE7 recorded the lowest (3.60). The results indicate generally favourable perceptions of advocacy effectiveness, although responses relating to actual advocacy action and participation were comparatively less favourable than some measures of awareness and support.

Dimension-Level Findings

Table 11: Dimension-Level Descriptive Statistics

Dimension	Items	Mean	SD
Strategic Communication	3	3.71	0.64
Media Relations	3	3.70	0.66
Digital Communication	3	3.72	0.64
Community Relations	3	3.71	0.67
Stakeholder Dialogue	3	3.77	0.62
Credibility/Dependability	3	3.74	0.66
Integrity	3	3.76	0.65
Competence	3	3.75	0.68
Stakeholder Orientation	3	3.76	0.65
Public Awareness/Salience	3	3.64	0.74
Stakeholder Support	3	3.66	0.72
Advocacy Action/Participation	3	3.63	0.73
Perceived Influence	3	3.64	0.71

The dimension-level results show that stakeholder dialogue recorded the highest mean (3.77) among the PR dimensions. Within stakeholder trust, integrity and stakeholder orientation recorded the highest means (3.76 each). Advocacy action/participation recorded the lowest dimension-level mean (3.63), suggesting that translating advocacy communication into action remains comparatively weaker than the relational aspects of nonprofit communication.

Reliability Analysis

Table 12: Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α
Public Relations Strategies	15	0.900
Stakeholder Trust	12	0.892
Advocacy Effectiveness	12	0.902

The three constructs recorded Cronbach's alpha coefficients between 0.892 and 0.902, indicating high internal consistency of the measurement items.

Correlation Analysis

Table 13: Correlation Matrix

Variable	PR Strategies	Stakeholder Trust	Advocacy Effectiveness
PR Strategies	1.000	0.672	0.695
Stakeholder Trust	0.672	1.000	0.812
Advocacy Effectiveness	0.695	0.812	1.000

The results indicate positive relationships among all three variables. PR strategies correlate positively with stakeholder trust ($r = .672$) and advocacy effectiveness ($r = .695$). The strongest relationship occurs between stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness ($r = .812$).

This provides preliminary support for the proposition that stakeholder trust is closely associated with perceived advocacy effectiveness.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 14: Direct Effects

Relationship	β	t	p
PR Strategies → Stakeholder Trust	0.705	15.67	<.001
Stakeholder Trust → Advocacy Effectiveness	0.700	14.68	<.001
PR Strategies → Advocacy Effectiveness	0.810	16.69	<.001

The three direct relationships are statistically significant at $p < .001$. PR strategies significantly predict stakeholder trust ($\beta = .705$), stakeholder trust significantly predicts advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .700$), and PR strategies significantly predict advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .810$).

Accordingly:

- H01 is rejected.
- H02 is rejected.
- H03 is rejected.

The results demonstrate that all three proposed direct relationships are statistically significant.

Mediation Analysis

Table 15: Mediation Analysis

Effect	Coefficient	95% CI
Indirect effect (PRS → Trust → Advocacy)	0.493	[0.413, 0.578]
Direct effect	0.810	—
Total effect	0.695	—

The reported indirect effect of PR strategies on advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust is 0.493, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.413, 0.578]. Because the interval does not include zero, the reported indirect pathway is statistically significant. Thus, H04 is rejected, indicating a significant indirect effect of public relations strategies on advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust. However, the direct effect (0.810) and total effect (0.695) reported in the original findings require verification against the underlying statistical output before journal submission. We will retain the original figures for now rather than alter the source findings, but we should not draw a conclusion about full versus partial mediation until the figures have been checked.

Summary of Findings

The findings show that respondents generally evaluated the public relations strategies of the selected nonprofit organizations positively, with stakeholder dialogue recording the highest PR dimension mean. Stakeholder trust was also favourably rated across credibility/dependability, integrity, competence and stakeholder orientation. Advocacy effectiveness received generally positive but comparatively lower ratings, particularly regarding advocacy action and participation. The correlation analysis revealed positive associations among PR strategies, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness, with the strongest relationship occurring between stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness ($r = .812$).

The direct-effect analysis showed significant relationships between PR strategies and stakeholder trust, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness, and PR strategies and advocacy effectiveness. The reported mediation analysis also indicates a significant indirect effect through stakeholder trust.

Discussion of Findings

Public Relations Strategies and Nonprofit Advocacy

- The findings show that respondents generally perceived the selected nonprofit organizations as using public relations strategies positively. The mean scores for the PR strategy items ranged from 3.66 to 3.79, while stakeholder dialogue recorded the highest dimension mean (3.77). This suggests that the organizations' advocacy communication extends beyond simply disseminating information to include interaction with stakeholders.
- The finding supports previous research which identifies stakeholder engagement, digital communication and relationship-building as important components of contemporary nonprofit communication (Waters et al., 2021; Ihm, 2024). It also suggests that nonprofit advocacy in Edo State increasingly depends on a combination of communication channels and stakeholder interaction.
- However, the relatively stronger rating for stakeholder dialogue is particularly significant. It suggests that respondents value opportunities to interact with advocacy organizations rather than receiving advocacy messages passively. This supports the relational perspective of public relations, which views effective communication as a process of developing and maintaining relationships with publics.

Public Relations Strategies and Stakeholder Trust

- The first major inferential finding established a significant positive relationship between public relations strategies and stakeholder trust ($\beta = .705$, $t = 15.67$, $p < .001$). The finding indicates that respondents who perceived the organizations' PR practices more positively also tended to report higher levels of trust.
- This supports the relational orientation of public relations and agrees with studies which emphasize trust, openness, transparency and stakeholder engagement as important elements of nonprofit relationship-building.

- The finding is particularly relevant to nonprofit advocacy because organizations must establish credibility before stakeholders are likely to accept their messages and support their causes.
- The result therefore suggests that PR effectiveness should not be evaluated only through visibility or message reach. The ability of communication strategies to generate credibility, confidence and positive stakeholder relationships is equally important.

Stakeholder Trust and Advocacy Effectiveness

- The second major finding shows that stakeholder trust significantly predicts advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .700$, $t = 14.68$, $p < .001$). The correlation between the two variables was also particularly strong ($r = .812$), making it the strongest relationship among the major variables examined.
- This finding suggests that advocacy is more likely to be perceived as effective when stakeholders regard the nonprofit organization as credible, reliable, competent and genuinely concerned about the issues it addresses.
- The finding therefore reinforces the argument that stakeholder trust is not merely an organizational outcome; it is also an important condition for effective advocacy.

Public Relations Strategies and Advocacy Effectiveness

- The third finding demonstrates a significant positive relationship between PR strategies and advocacy effectiveness ($\beta = .810$, $t = 16.69$, $p < .001$). This indicates that stronger perceptions of the organizations' public relations practices are associated with stronger perceptions of advocacy effectiveness. The finding is consistent with research showing that nonprofit organizations use communication strategically to create awareness, mobilize stakeholders and advance social causes (Ihm, 2024; Waters et al., 2021).
- However, the descriptive findings provide an important qualification. Advocacy action/participation recorded the lowest dimension mean (3.63), despite the generally positive assessment of PR strategies. This suggests that effective communication does not necessarily translate automatically into direct stakeholder action. Consequently, nonprofit organizations may need to combine awareness-oriented communication with

specific opportunities for participation, mobilisation and sustained stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder Trust as a Mediating Factor

- The most important finding for the study's central argument is the significant indirect effect of PR strategies on advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust (indirect effect = .493; 95% CI [.413, .578]). This finding suggests that PR strategies may contribute to advocacy effectiveness partly by strengthening the relationship between nonprofit organizations and their stakeholders. In other words, effective PR does not only communicate the advocacy message; it can also create the trust necessary for stakeholders to accept, support and respond to that message.
- This finding provides empirical support for the study's relational perspective and represents the major contribution of the study. Rather than treating PR strategies and advocacy effectiveness as a simple direct relationship, the study identifies stakeholder trust as an important explanatory mechanism.
- However, the direct and total effects reported in the original findings should be rechecked against the underlying statistical output before journal submission because the reported direct effect (0.810) is higher than the reported total effect (0.695). The indirect effect itself is reported as significant, but the type of mediation should not be classified until the figures are verified.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between public relations strategies, stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness among selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State, Nigeria. The study focused on BraveHeart Initiative, Pathfinders Justice Initiative and SOTHAWACA and examined how their public relations practices relate to stakeholder trust and the perceived effectiveness of their advocacy activities.

The findings demonstrate that respondents generally viewed the public relations strategies of the selected organizations positively. More importantly, the study established significant relationships between public relations strategies and stakeholder trust, between stakeholder trust and advocacy effectiveness, and between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness.

The findings further indicate a significant indirect relationship between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness through stakeholder trust. This suggests that the effectiveness of nonprofit advocacy is not determined solely by the ability of organizations to disseminate advocacy messages. Rather, the trust developed between organizations and their stakeholders represents an important relational dimension of the advocacy process.

The study therefore concludes that effective nonprofit advocacy requires both strategic communication and sustained stakeholder relationships. For organizations involved in SGBV advocacy, credibility, responsiveness, transparency and stakeholder engagement are particularly important because the issues being addressed often require sustained public support and participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Nonprofit organizations should strengthen stakeholder dialogue. Advocacy communication should provide opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions provide feedback and participate in advocacy activities.
2. Organizations should prioritize trust-building in their PR strategies. Consistent, transparent and credible communication should be maintained across traditional, digital and community-based channels.
3. Advocacy campaigns should move beyond awareness creation. Organizations should provide clear opportunities for stakeholders to participate, volunteer, support campaigns and take appropriate action.
4. Digital communication should be integrated with community engagement. Social media should complement, rather than replace, direct engagement with communities and other relevant stakeholders.
5. Nonprofit organizations should regularly evaluate stakeholder perceptions. Periodic assessment of trust, communication effectiveness and advocacy outcomes can help organizations identify weaknesses and improve future campaigns.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to nonprofit public relations scholarship by demonstrating that stakeholder trust provides an important relational link between public relations strategies and advocacy effectiveness. While previous studies have examined nonprofit communication, stakeholder engagement and trust

separately, this study brings the three concepts together within a single framework and applies the framework to nonprofit advocacy in Edo State.

The study therefore shifts attention from viewing PR primarily as a communication or publicity function towards understanding it as a relationship-building mechanism that can contribute to advocacy outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to three selected nonprofit organizations in Edo State and therefore its findings should be interpreted within that context. The study also relied on respondents' perceptions of advocacy effectiveness rather than independent measures of actual behavioural or policy change.

Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the extent to which causal relationships can be established. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine whether changes in stakeholder trust over time produce corresponding changes in advocacy outcomes.

References

- BraveHeart Initiative for Youth & Women. (n.d.). <https://www.braveheartinitiative.org/>
- Brusseel, A., Raeymaeckers, P., & Verschuere, B. (2025). Conceptualizing policy advocacy effectiveness in NPO research: A scoping review of criteria and indicators. *VOLUNTAS*, 36, 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-024-00692-1>
- Brusseel, A., Raeymaeckers, P., & Verschuere, B. (2025). How can nonprofit policy advocacy influence policymakers? A factorial survey experiment on the effects of nonprofit advocacy strategies on policymakers' willingness to act. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 54(2), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640241252616>
- Carrillo-Durán, M. V., Tato-Jiménez, J. L., Chapleo, C., & Sepulcri, L. (2023). Enhancing non-profit engagement: The extended model of webpage engagement and adoption for strategic management. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10, 524. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01980-9>
- Chapman, C. M., Hornsey, M. J., & Gillespie, N. (2021). No global crisis of trust: A longitudinal and multinational examination of public trust in nonprofits. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 50(2), 273–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020962221>
- Edo State Government. (2024a). Edo State Govt kicks off 16 Days of Activism against GBV. <https://edostate.gov.ng/edo-state-govt-kicks-off-16-days-of-activism-against-gbv/>
- Edo State Government. (2024b). Edo State Govt convenes stakeholders to drive gender equality for inclusivity. <https://edostate.gov.ng/edo-state-govt-convenes-stakeholders-to-drive-gender-equality-for-inclusivity/>
- Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues. (n.d.). Department of Women Affairs. <https://msdgi.edostate.gov.ng/departments-of-women-affairs/>
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & UNFPA. (2022). National communication strategy on ending all forms of gender-based violence. <https://nigeria.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-communication-strategy-ending-all-forms-gbv-0>
- Fu, J. S., Cooper, K. R., Woo, D. J., & Kwestel, M. (2024). Beyond stakeholder management: Organizational listening for nonprofit stakeholder engagement. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 53(4), 841–865. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640231201068>
- Ihm, J. (2022). How individuals use nonprofit organizations' social media pages: Understanding functions of and networks from individual posts for social change. *Public Relations Review*, 48(5), 102252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102252>
- Ihm, J. (2023). Why do individuals create posts on organizations' social media pages? Identifications, functions, and audiences beyond the organizational boundary for social change. *Human Communication Research*, 49(3), 272–284. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqac034>
- Ihm, J. (2024). Organizational communication for social change on social media: NPOs' social media strategies based on their perception of three stakeholder networks in collective and connective action. *Journal of Communication*, 74(5), 410–423. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqae034>
- Klafke, R. V., Gomes, P. M., Mendonça Junior, D., Didonet, S. R., & Toaldo, A. M. (2021). Engagement in social networks: A multi-method study in non-profits organizations. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 18, 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-020-00273-0>
- Ledingham, J. A. (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(2), 181–198.

- https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1502_4
- Li, Z. C., Ji, Y. G., Tao, W., & Chen, Z. F. (2022). Engaging your feelings: Emotion contagion and public engagement on nonprofit organizations' Facebook sites. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(6), 1281–1303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640211057398>
- Ma, X., Ma, L., & Liu, B. F. (2023). Should relationships be at the heart of public relations? A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of organization-public relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 49(5), 102388. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102388>
- MacIndoe, H., Beaton, E. E., Pache de Athayde, M. M., & Ojelabi, O. (2025). Giving voice: Examining the tactical repertoires of nonprofit advocacy for disadvantaged populations. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 16(1), 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2023-0054>
- Meyer, I., & Barker, R. (2022). A metamodern model for managing stakeholder relationships in non-profit organisations. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*, 41(1), 56–79.
- Oksiutycz, A., & Mwadiwa, K. F. (2023). Using social media as a tool for dialogic engagement: The case of an NGO in South Africa. *Communicatio*, 49(1), 90–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2023.2216901>
- Pathfinders Justice Initiative. (n.d.). What we do. <https://pathfindersji.org/what-we-do/>
- Resnick, D., Anigo, K., & Anjorin, O. M. (2022). Advocacy organizations and nutrition policy in Nigeria: Identifying metrics for enhanced efficacy. *Health Policy and Planning*, 37(8), 963–978. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czac037>
- Sánchez-Torné, I., Caro-González, F. J., & Pérez-Suárez, M. (2023). Content is key to non-profit digital media strategy. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 20, 927–945. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-022-00358-y>
- Sanusi, B. O. (2024). NGOs adopted communication channels towards curbing the occurrence of gender-based violence in Ondo State. *Corpus Intellectual*. <https://repository.run.edu.ng/handle/123456789/5863>
- Shahid, S., Becker, A., & Kundi, Y. M. (2022). Do reputational signals matter for nonprofit organizations? An experimental study. *Management Decision*, 60(6), 1645–1664. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-12-2020-1670>
- SOTHAWACA. (n.d.). Organizational information.
- Suh, J., Hoang, T., & Hijal-Moghrabi, I. (2021). Nonprofit external communications: General management, public relations, or fundraising tool? *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 7(2), 220–239. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.7.2.220-239>
- Ward, K. D., Mason, D. P., Park, G., & Fyall, R. (2023). Exploring nonprofit advocacy research methods and design: A systematic review of the literature. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 52(5), 1141–1164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221131747>