



Public Perception of Public Relations Strategies and Corporate Image of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

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Abstract

This study examined public perception of Public Relations (PR) strategies and the corporate image of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Guided by Melvin Sharpe's Behavioural Theory of Public Relations, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected online from 362 respondents across Nigeria and analysed using frequencies, percentages and mean scores. The findings revealed that social media (M=3.30) and media relations (M=3.21) were the most recognised PR strategies, while grassroots engagement, corporate social responsibility and community outreach received less recognition. Overall awareness of EFCC PR activities was moderate (grand mean=2.58), while perceptions of the Commission's corporate image were neutral to negative (grand mean=2.56). Respondents also identified substantial challenges to PR effectiveness (grand mean=3.50), including perceived political influence, limited transparency regarding recovered assets, perceived selective justice, human rights concerns and poor responsiveness. The study concludes that although EFCC PR strategies contribute to public awareness, their effectiveness is constrained by credibility gaps and inconsistencies between institutional communication and behaviour. It recommends a shift from predominantly one-way communication towards a participatory, transparent and trust-based two-way symmetrical PR approach to strengthen public confidence and improve the Commission's corporate image.

Keywords: corporate image, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, public perception, public relations, public relations strategies

Introduction

Every institution requires a favourable corporate image to gain the support of its stakeholders and target publics and achieve its objectives. However, corporate image does not automatically translate into public trust; how an institution communicates its actions and how these actions are perceived also matter. This is particularly important for public institutions operating under intense scrutiny, where public confidence and cooperation influence institutional effectiveness. Public Relations (PR) is therefore essential for communicating institutional activities, managing perceptions and building relationships with stakeholders. PR is defined as a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics (Bajaj, 2023).

Research indicates that effective PR can influence public attitudes, strengthen institutional trust and counter misinformation (Opeyemi et al., 2024; Sheyigari, 2023). It also contributes to organisational image and reputation through corporate communication and the development of mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships (Ma et al., 2023). Hence, governments and their agencies employ PR to engage citizens, communicate policies and promote transparency and service delivery (Dike, 2025; Igben & Dorka, 2024; Owino, 2022). These functions are particularly relevant to anti-corruption agencies, whose effectiveness depends not only on enforcement but



also on public confidence, cooperation and the willingness of citizens to provide information about financial crimes.

In Nigeria, corruption remains a significant obstacle to national development despite successive government interventions (Oji, 2024). Following the return to democratic governance in 1999, renewed anti-corruption efforts led to the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under the EFCC Act 2002 (Hassan, 2021). The Commission investigates financial crimes, coordinates the enforcement of relevant laws and prosecutes offenders. Its establishment was partly influenced by international pressure to align Nigeria with global anti-money laundering standards (Akume & Okoli, 2016). In 2024, the EFCC secured 4,111 convictions and recovered assets exceeding ₦364.5 billion and US\$214.5 million (Vanguard, 2025). It has also prosecuted high-profile cases involving former public officials (EFCC, 2025). However, these achievements have not necessarily translated into public confidence, as concerns about political victimisation and selective justice persist in public discourse. This raises questions about the relationship between the Commission's institutional achievements, its PR communication efforts and public perceptions of its corporate image. This study examined perceived PR Strategies and Corporate Image of EFCC.

Statement of the Problem

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is mandated to investigate financial crimes, coordinate the enforcement of economic and financial crimes laws, prosecute offenders and conduct public enlightenment campaigns against financial crimes (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission [EFCC] Establishment Act, 2002). To fulfil this mandate effectively, the Commission needs a favourable corporate image characterised by public trust, credibility, transparency and impartiality (Park & Cho, 2009), managing organisational reputation and encouraging supportive behaviour (Onwunali, 2018). Accordingly, the EFCC deploys PR strategies including press releases, social media engagement and sensitisation campaigns through its Media and Public Affairs Department (EFCC, 2024). Other initiatives include EFCC Radio 97.3 FM, the *Eagle Watch* television programme, the *Eagle Eye* mobile application, school-based Integrity Clubs and community sensitisation campaigns (Idika, 2022; Ogunwemimo & Obayi, 2025; Akoja & Bamgbelu, 2020; Adewole, 2021).

Despite these interventions, the EFCC continues to face negative public perceptions, with studies reporting portrayals of the Commission as a partisan instrument of political victimisation (Kolo, 2021; Rex, 2020; Mohammed & Muslim, 2025). Such perceptions may undermine public trust, discourage cooperation and weaken the institutional legitimacy necessary for effective anti-corruption enforcement. This raises questions about the extent to which the Commission's PR strategies translate into favourable outcome particularly corporate image.

Although previous studies have examined EFCC PR communication and public perception (Ngene et al., 2017; Ogunwemimo & Obayi, 2025), their concentration in locations such as Lagos, Rivers, Enugu and the Federal Capital Territory limits understanding of public perceptions across Nigeria's diverse sociocultural and geopolitical contexts. Therefore, nationwide empirical evidence remains limited regarding public awareness of EFCC PR strategies, perceptions of its corporate image, the perceived influence of these strategies on public awareness, knowledge and behaviour, and the challenges undermining their effectiveness. This study addresses these gaps by examining public perceptions of EFCC PR strategies and corporate image across Nigeria.



Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the strategic public relations interventions of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and their influence on public perception across Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the PR strategies employed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.
2. Examine the level of public awareness of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission PR activities.
3. Assess public perception of the corporate image of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in Nigeria.
4. Ascertain the challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission PR strategies in promoting a positive image.

Literature Review

Public Relations Strategies

Public relations (PR) has been defined in numerous ways by scholars and practitioners, yet most definitions converge on its essential purpose: managing communication and relationships between an organisation and its publics. According to Kurniawan and Wijoyo (2025), PR functions as a communication bridge that enables understanding among different societal groups through research, issue identification, and meaning creation. It serves as both a facilitator and a strategic communication manager, fostering dialogue that shapes perceptions and social cohesion. Görpe and Öksüz (2024) opine that PR is a dynamic and strategic form of dialogue that is broad in scope, often misunderstood, and complex due to the limited control practitioners have over public interpretation of messages. This complexity underscores PR's dual nature as both an art and a science, requiring analytical and interpersonal competence.

A strategy is a carefully structured and deliberate plan of action designed to achieve specific organisational goals. Within communication practice, strategy refers to planned, coordinated activities that advance the interests of an organisation, government, or institution (Shadrach, 2023). Oshie and Ushie (2021) similarly define strategies as a series of coordinated actions aimed at accomplishing defined objectives. Corroborating this view, Cutlip et al. (2005) state that public relations strategies are systematic, goal-driven communication approaches intended to help organisations or agencies build mutual understanding and positive relationships with their publics. Mintzberg and Quinn (1991, as cited in Cutlip et al., 2005, p. 349) describe a PR strategy as “a well-formulated plan that helps to marshal and allocate an organisation's resources into a unique and viable position based on its strengths, weaknesses, anticipated environmental changes, and the likely moves of a capable opponent.”

Corporate Image

Corporate image is a multidimensional construct in communication, marketing and organisational studies, referring to the overall impression stakeholders form of an organisation. It encompasses cognitive, emotional and symbolic associations developed through organisational behaviour, communication, corporate social responsibility (CSR), direct experiences and media representations (Özcan & Elçi, 2020; Foroudi & Montes, 2017; Antwi et al., 2024). Although organisations attempt to shape their image through corporate communication, identity management and CSR initiatives, digital media, stakeholder participation, algorithmic content distribution and media framing make image formation dynamic and difficult to control fully (Ennenbach & Barkela, 2024). Corporate image is therefore not merely a communication outcome



but also a strategic resource associated with stakeholder trust, customer engagement, employee identification, brand loyalty and organisational legitimacy (Antwi et al., 2024). It can also influence organisational resilience during reputational crises (Ennenbach & Barkela, 2024).

Corporate image is particularly important for public institutions and accountability agencies because perceptions of organisational integrity, transparency and fairness can influence public trust and institutional support (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2020; Meijer & Wessels, 2019). For the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), corporate image may reflect public assessments of its investigative competence, prosecution outcomes and asset recovery, as well as emotional responses such as trust or scepticism and symbolic associations with authority and justice. These perceptions are shaped by institutional performance, media narratives and public discourse (Hafez, 2018; Hamidi et al., 2023). Research identifies functional image, relating to perceived competence and performance, as an important basis for stakeholder satisfaction and trust (Purwanto et al., 2020; Lim & Young, 2021). Emotional image reflects affective responses to an organisation, while symbolic image concerns the meanings attached to its identity, branding and institutional narratives (Foroudi & Montes, 2017; Hamidi et al., 2023). These dimensions interact with current image, which represents public perceptions at a particular time, and desired image, which reflects how an organisation wishes to be perceived (Steiner et al., 2013; Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando et al., 2018; Chun, 2005; Balmer & Greyser, 2002).

Other perspectives extend this understanding to mirror image, which concerns organisational members' beliefs about how external publics perceive their institution (Dutton et al., 1994; Balmer, 2008), and multiple image, which recognises that different stakeholder groups may hold divergent views of the same organisation (Melewar & Akel, 2005; Steiner et al., 2013). These distinctions are relevant to the EFCC because its institutional self-perception and desired image may differ from the perceptions held by citizens, journalists, political actors and other stakeholders. Corporate image is also closely related to corporate reputation: while image captures perceptions at a particular point in time, reputation develops through the accumulation of stakeholder experiences and evaluations over time (Gray & Balmer, 1998; Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando et al., 2018). Accordingly, the EFCC's overall corporate image cannot be understood through enforcement achievements or communication activities alone; it requires consideration of perceived performance, public sentiment, institutional symbolism and the potentially divergent perceptions of its stakeholder groups (Lim & Young, 2021; Hamidi et al., 2023; Bigus et al., 2023).

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2002 under the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo as part of Nigeria's renewed efforts to combat corruption, money laundering and other economic and financial crimes (Ugwuja, 2016). Its establishment reflected concerns about financial malfeasance, weak accountability and the damage corruption caused to Nigeria's economic development and international reputation. The EFCC Act provides the legal framework for the Commission's operations, empowering it to investigate and prosecute economic and financial crimes, enforce relevant laws, trace and recover proceeds of crime, and coordinate efforts with other law enforcement agencies (EFCC Act, 2004; Ahmed, 2021; EFCC, n.d.). Organisationally, the Commission comprises specialised departments and operational units, including Finance and Accounts, Human Resources, Media and Publicity, information and communication technology, and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), supported by zonal offices across the country (EFCC, n.d.). Beyond investigation and prosecution,



the Commission undertakes preventive and regulatory activities through initiatives such as the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML), which supervises compliance among Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (SCUML, n.d.). These functions position the EFCC as a central institution in Nigeria's anti-corruption and financial governance framework.

Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical studies on the EFCC demonstrate that public relations and media practices can influence institutional credibility, public trust and perceptions of anti-corruption efforts. Ngene et al. (2017), using a mixed-methods design involving 399 survey respondents and nine interviewees in Enugu State, found that the EFCC's media trials raised concerns about inadequate fact-finding, investigative journalism and political interference, although public perceptions of their contribution to the anti-corruption campaign were neutral. Similarly, Ogunwemimo and Obayi (2025) found a significant relationship between EFCC public relations activities and public exposure to anti-corruption narratives, with strategic communication positively associated with institutional trust. However, scepticism about the authenticity of televised arrests indicated persistent transparency concerns. Chiakaan and Shallum (2023) also identified deficiencies in the EFCC's application of strategic public relations principles, suggesting that limited understanding of professional PR practices could undermine institutional trust and democratic credibility. Complementing these findings, Gbakighir (2024) observed that the EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) relied heavily on tactical communication tools, including press releases, newsletters and public engagements, without sufficient strategic coordination.

Studies of public relations in other Nigerian public institutions provide further evidence that communication visibility does not necessarily translate into public trust or a favourable institutional image. Research on the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has identified persistent challenges associated with unprofessional practices, inadequate funding, limited communication resources and ineffective engagement. Oluwasola (2016) found that asymmetrical communication and discriminatory media engagement undermined police transparency, while Ikenna (2023) reported that existing PR practices in the Enugu State Command sometimes reinforced public mistrust. Umaru et al. (2025) similarly identified a gap between image-management objectives and communication practices in the Adamawa State Command, attributing ineffective reputation management partly to shortages of professional practitioners and communication tools. Dapiya and Obateru (2025) also found that negative public sentiment persisted despite the deployment of image-redeeming strategies across parts of North-Central Nigeria.

Beyond law enforcement, Ejiogu et al. (2024) reported that extensive exposure to government communication about developmental projects did not significantly influence public perception or project acceptance in Owerri. However, Omachi et al. (2024) associated transparency, stakeholder engagement and social media use with improved community participation, while Ubandoma and Ugondo (2024) identified a relationship between strategic communication and public cooperation in tax administration. Related studies by Kalu et al. (2024), Abimiku et al. (2024), Balaleye and Adelakun (2020), Arebai and Ijeh (2024), Suleiman et al. (2024), and Kaleli et al. (2021) further demonstrate the application of PR in political communication, crisis management, governance and development. Although these studies offer valuable contextual insights, their findings cannot automatically be generalised to Nigeria's diverse socio-political and cultural environments.



Melvin Sharpe Behavioural Theory

The study is anchored on the Melvin Sharpe's Behavioural Theory, of public relation which was articulated in 1989. The theory posits that stable organisational relationships with publics depend on five behavioural principles: honesty, openness, fairness, continuous two-way communication and systematic environmental research (Asemah, 2011; Obinna & Shadrach, 2021). The theory shifts public relations from mere image-making to the alignment of organisational behaviour with ethical and communicative responsibilities. Honesty and fairness promote credibility and trust, while openness, continuous communication and environmental research facilitate stakeholder engagement and help organisations respond to public expectations (Kent et al., 2003). The theory has been applied in diverse Nigerian institutional contexts, including commercial banking (Smith & Ogbuoshi, 2016), political public relations through social media (Maikomo & Shadrach, 2023) and academic library service delivery (Ajibade, 2016).

In this study, Sharpe's Behavioural Theory provides a framework for evaluating whether the EFCC's public relations strategies reflect the five principles and contribute to a favourable corporate image. Honesty provides a basis for assessing the accuracy and transparency of the Commission's communication about its anti-corruption activities, while fairness relates to public perceptions of impartiality across Nigeria's diverse political and regional contexts. Openness provides a basis for examining whether the EFCC's communication channels encourage transparency and genuine stakeholder participation rather than one-way information dissemination. Continuous two-way communication and systematic environmental research further guide the assessment of the Commission's responsiveness to public concerns and its understanding of variations in public perception across the six geopolitical zones.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The target population comprised Nigerian adults aged 18 years and above, estimated at 114,840,000. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error. Nigeria's six geopolitical zones were represented through the selection of Benue, Taraba, Kano, Anambra, Delta and Lagos states, with the Federal Capital Territory included as an additional study area. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and mean scores. Mean scores of 3.50–5.00 indicated high or positive agreement, 2.50–3.49 moderate or neutral perception, 1.50–2.49 low or negative agreement, and 1.00–1.49 very low or strong disagreement. The interpretation of scores was adjusted to reflect the specific meaning of each construct. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, with the questionnaire excluding personally identifiable information.

Table 2. *Demographic Data of Respondents (N=362)*

Item	Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	174	48.1
	Female	188	51.9
Age Group	18–25	145	40.1
	26–35	112	30.9
	36–45	68	18.8
	46–55	25	6.9
	56+	12	3.3
	None	5	1.4
Highest Edu. Qualification	None	5	1.4



FSLC	18	5.0
SSCE	62	17.1
Diploma/NCE	75	20.7
Bachelor's/HND	154	42.5
Postgraduate	48	13.3

The data in Table 2 above show the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The results indicate that the sample comprised predominantly young and highly educated respondents. With a combined 71% of the sample falling within the 18–35 age range, the study captures substantial representation of the youth population. Furthermore, 55.8% of the respondents held Bachelor's degrees, HNDs, or postgraduate qualifications, indicating a relatively highly educated sample. This level of educational attainment may suggest that respondents were sufficiently equipped to engage with and assess information about the Commission's public relations activities. Geographically, the data show representation from the selected areas across the geopolitical zones covered by the study.

Table 3. Respondents' Identified PR Strategies Used by the EFCC (n = 362)

S/N	Statement	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)	Mean	Decision
1	The EFCC uses social media for public communication and image promotion.	22% (80)	28% (101)	20% (72)	18% (65)	12% (43)	3.30	Accepted
2	The EFCC engages in media relations such as press releases, press conferences, and interviews.	20% (72)	27% (98)	20% (72)	20% (72)	13% (47)	3.21	Accepted
4	The EFCC engages relevant stakeholders in its public relations activities.	16% (58)	20% (72)	25% (91)	22% (80)	17% (61)	2.96	Rejected
5	The EFCC organises workshops and seminars to sensitise the public.	15% (54)	22% (80)	26% (94)	21% (76)	16% (58)	2.99	Rejected
6	The EFCC engages clubs and societies as part of its public relations strategies.	14% (51)	21% (76)	27% (98)	22% (80)	16% (58)	2.95	Rejected
7	The EFCC carries out outreach programmes in schools and communities.	10% (36)	15% (54)	20% (72)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.55	Rejected
8	The EFCC undertakes corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to enhance its public image.	9% (33)	12% (43)	18% (65)	32% (116)	29% (105)	2.40	Rejected
9	Integration with religious/community leaders	8% (29)	10% (36)	17% (62)	35% (127)	30% (108)	2.31	
Grand Mean							2.87	Rejected

Note: Very High=3.50-5.00; High 3.00 – 3.49 (Accepted) ; Moderate=2.50 – 2.99 Low=1.50-2.49 (Rejected)

The findings in Table 3 indicate that social media communication (M = 3.30) and media relations activities, including press releases and press conferences (M = 3.21), were the most recognised public relations strategies employed by the EFCC. Respondents also moderately acknowledged workshops and seminars (M = 2.99), stakeholder engagement (M = 2.96), and the use of clubs and societies (M = 2.95). However, school and community outreach programmes (M = 2.55), corporate social responsibility activities (M = 2.40), and engagement with religious and community leaders (M = 2.31) recorded lower mean scores.



Table 4. Respondents' Level of Awareness of EFCC Public Relations Activities (n=362)

S/N	Statement	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)	Mean	Decision
1	I am aware of EFCC's official website as sources of information.	8% (29)	12% (43)	20% (72)	30% (109)	30% (109)	2.38	Rejected
2	I am aware of EFCC's official publications e.g Magazines	7% (25)	13% (47)	18% (65)	32% (116)	30% (109)	2.34	Rejected
3	I am aware of EFCC mobile app (Eagle Eye) for reporting crimes.	6% (22)	10% (36)	20% (72)	34% (123)	30% (109)	2.30	Rejected
4	I am aware of EFCC radio (Eagle Radio) and programmes on other stations	10% (36)	15% (54)	20% (72)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.65	Rejected
5	I often see or read EFCC official statements or press releases in the media.	9% (33)	14% (51)	18% (65)	32% (116)	27% (98)	2.55	Rejected
6	I often come across EFCC updates on social media.	20% (72)	25% (91)	20% (72)	20% (72)	15% (55)	3.15	Accepted
7	I often read or hear about EFCC activities in newspapers, radio, or television.	25% (91)	30% (109)	20% (72)	15% (54)	10% (36)	3.46	Accepted
8	I have seen EFCC billboards, posters, or public awareness messages.	9% (33)	13% (47)	18% (65)	30% (109)	30% (109)	2.42	Rejected
9	I am aware of EFCC public campaigns such as rallies, road walks, or outreach programmes.	7% (25)	12% (43)	20% (72)	31% (112)	30% (109)	2.36	Rejected
10	I am aware of EFCC initiatives in schools (e.g., Integrity Clubs).	6% (22)	10% (36)	18% (65)	34% (123)	32% (116)	2.24	Rejected
11	I am aware of EFCC engagement with community, religious, or traditional leaders.	7% (25)	11% (40)	19% (69)	33% (119)	30% (109)	2.32	Rejected
12	I am aware that EFCC uses public figures or celebrities in its campaigns.	6% (22)	10% (36)	20% (72)	34% (123)	30% (109)	2.30	Rejected
13	I am aware of EFCC workshops, seminars, or public education programmes.	7% (25)	12% (43)	18% (65)	33% (119)	30% (109)	2.33	Rejected
14	I am aware of EFCC community support or social responsibility activities.	6% (22)	11% (40)	19% (69)	34% (123)	30% (108)	2.3.1	Rejected
Grand Mean							2.58	

Decision Criterion: 5.00 – 3.50 = Very High; 3.49 – 3.00 = High; (Accepted); 2.99 – 2.50 = Moderate; 2.49 – 1.50 = Low & Below 1.50 = Very Low (Rejected)

The results indicate a moderate level of awareness of the EFCC's public relations tools (grand mean = 2.58), based on the decision criterion of 2.50–2.99. Traditional media (M = 3.46) and social media (M = 3.15) were the most recognised channels, while institutional and participatory tools, including the official website, publications, Eagle Eye, school-based initiatives, workshops, community support programmes and engagements with traditional and religious leaders, recorded low mean scores (below 2.50). This suggests that respondents were more familiar with the EFCC's media-based communication than its other PR activities.

Table 5. Respondents' Perceived Corporate Image of EFCC (n = 362)

S/N	Statement	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)	Mean	Decision
1	EFCC provides truthful and accurate information at all times.	10% (36)	15% (54)	20% (72)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.55	Rejected
2	I trust the EFCC as a reliable agency in fighting financial crimes.	12% (43)	18% (65)	20% (72)	30% (109)	20% (72)	2.72	Rejected
3	EFCC is transparent in reporting recovered stolen funds.	9% (33)	14% (51)	22% (80)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.52	Rejected
4	I believe the EFCC operates without political influence.	8% (29)	12% (43)	18% (65)	32% (116)	30% (109)	2.36	Rejected
5	EFCC treats all suspects fairly.	10% (36)	15% (54)	20% (72)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.55	Rejected
6	EFCC operatives act professionally during arrests and investigations.	11% (40)	16% (58)	20% (72)	28% (101)	25% (91)	2.60	Rejected
7	EFCC respects human rights in carrying out its duties.	9% (33)	13% (47)	20% (72)	30% (109)	28% (101)	2.45	Rejected
8	EFCC is open and accessible to the public.	10% (36)	15% (54)	20% (72)	30% (109)	25% (91)	2.55	Rejected
9	EFCC is truly effective in fighting corruption in Nigeria.	13% (47)	17% (62)	22% (80)	28% (101)	20% (72)	2.75	Rejected
Grand Mean							2.56	Rejected

Decision Criterion: Positive Perception = 3.50–5.00 (Accepted); Negative Perception = 1.00 – 2.49; & Neutral Perception = 2.50–3.49 (Rejected)

The findings reveal that respondents had an overall neutral perception of the corporate image of the EFCC, as indicated by the grand mean of 2.56, which falls within the neutral range (2.50–3.49) based on the adopted decision criterion. The individual items measuring corporate image, such as the truthfulness of information, transparency in the management of recovered funds, fairness in the treatment of suspects, respect for human rights, and political independence, generally recorded low to moderate mean scores within the neutral range, suggesting that respondents did not strongly affirm these core institutional image indicators, indicating a limited level of confidence in these areas. Although perceived effectiveness in fighting corruption recorded the highest mean score (M = 2.85), it remained within the neutral category, suggesting that respondents acknowledged some level of effectiveness but did not perceive it strongly enough to indicate a positive corporate image.

Table 6: Respondents' Perceived Challenges Undermining EFCC's PR strategies for promoting Corporate Image

S/N	Statement	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)	Mean	Decision
1	Perceived political influence weakens the credibility of EFCC's communication efforts.	28% (101)	30% (109)	18% (65)	14% (51)	10% (36)	3.52	Accepted
2	The timing of EFCC actions makes its public messages appear politically driven.	26% (94)	32% (116)	18% (65)	14% (51)	10% (36)	3.50	Accepted
3	The belief that some individuals are above the law undermines EFCC's image and PR messages.	30% (109)	28% (101)	17% (62)	15% (54)	10% (36)	3.53	Accepted
4	Reports of human rights abuses damage the effectiveness of EFCC's public relations efforts.	27% (98)	31% (112)	18% (65)	14% (51)	10% (36)	3.51	Accepted
5	The focus on cybercrime over high-profile corruption cases weakens EFCC's corporate image.	25% (91)	30% (109)	20% (72)	15% (54)	10% (36)	3.45	Accepted
6	Emphasis on arrests rather than convictions reduces the impact of EFCC's communication.	26% (94)	29% (105)	20% (72)	15% (54)	10% (36)	3.46	Accepted
7	Lack of transparency in managing recovered assets undermines trust in EFCC's PR messages.	29% (105)	30% (109)	17% (62)	14% (51)	10% (36)	3.54	Accepted
8	Poor response to public inquiries, especially on social media, weakens EFCC's communication efforts.	27% (98)	31% (112)	18% (65)	14% (51)	10% (36)	3.51	Accepted
9	Negative public reactions on social media reduce the effectiveness of EFCC's image promotion.	26% (94)	30% (109)	19% (69)	15% (54)	10% (36)	3.47	Accepted
Grand Mean							3.50	Accepted

Decision Criterion: 5.00 – 3.50 = *Very High*; 3.49 – 3.00 = *High (Accepted)*; 2.99 – 2.50 = *Moderate*; 2.49 – 1.50 = *Low & Below 1.50 = Very Low (Rejected)*

The findings indicate that respondents perceived substantial challenges affecting the EFCC's public relations strategies and corporate image, as reflected in the grand mean of 3.47. Key concerns included perceived political influence, inadequate transparency in recovered asset management, and the belief that some individuals are above the law, all of which were perceived as undermining public trust and institutional credibility. Respondents also identified the emphasis on arrests rather than convictions, the perceived prioritisation of cybercrime over high-profile corruption cases, and human rights concerns as factors weakening the Commission's legitimacy. Additionally, poor responsiveness to public enquiries and negative reactions on social media suggested limitations in interactive communication and stakeholder engagement.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that the EFCC predominantly employed media-centric public relations strategies, particularly social media platforms and traditional media relations, such as press



releases, press conferences, and interviews. The findings suggest that the EFCC's PR activities were perceived as being more oriented towards mass communication and information dissemination than towards relational or participatory engagement. This finding aligns with Gbakighir (2024), who observed that EFCC PR practice was dominated by tactical tools such as press statements and media briefings, with limited strategic integration of community-based engagement. Similarly, Chiakaan and Shallum (2023) described this as an execution gap in which PR was understood but not fully operationalised as a strategic relational function.

The dominance of media-centric PR was contrasted with Sharpe's Behavioural Theory, which emphasises that effective public relations should be grounded in continuous two-way communication, openness, and stakeholder engagement. The findings suggest that the EFCC's reliance on media communication reflected partial alignment with these principles, while the relatively lower recognition of participatory and community-based strategies pointed to limitations in relational communication.

The study found a moderate level of public awareness of EFCC PR activities. This finding indicates that respondents' awareness of EFCC communication activities varied across communication channels, with greater recognition associated with mass media exposure than with institutional and community-based engagement structures. This finding aligns with Ngene et al. (2017), who argued that EFCC visibility was shaped by selective media exposure and uneven communication reach. It also supports Ejiogu et al. (2024), who found that high exposure did not necessarily translate into meaningful institutional understanding. From the perspective of Sharpe's Behavioural Theory, the moderate level of awareness suggests some effectiveness in communication dissemination, while the relatively weak recognition of participatory and feedback-oriented tools indicates limitations in achieving continuous two-way communication, which is regarded as an important element of sustainable public relations practice.

Furthermore, the study revealed that, although respondents moderately recognised the EFCC's effectiveness in fighting corruption, perceptions of transparency, fairness, political neutrality, and respect for human rights remained relatively low, with political independence and human rights respect recording among the lowest-rated indicators. The findings suggest that respondents recognised the Commission's enforcement role while expressing reservations about aspects of its ethical and procedural credibility. This finding aligns with Ngene et al. (2017), who reported neutral perceptions of EFCC media trials and highlighted concerns about politicisation. It also supports Ejiogu et al. (2024), who argued that exposure to institutional communication did not necessarily guarantee a positive perception, particularly where concerns about institutional credibility existed. However, the finding differs from Ogunwemimo and Obayi (2025), who reported stronger associations between PR exposure and institutional trust in Lagos, suggesting that corporate image formation may vary according to geographical and contextual conditions.

This outcome is consistent with Perception Theory, as the findings suggest that respondents' perceptions of corporate image may be influenced by prior beliefs, political interpretations, and individual cognitive processing. It also relates to Sharpe's Behavioural Theory, particularly its emphasis on institutional behaviour, including fairness, transparency, and openness, in shaping relationships with stakeholders. The neutral perception of the EFCC's corporate image therefore suggests that respondents' assessments of institutional behaviour may have implications for the Commission's image-building efforts.



The study also found that respondents perceived political influence, lack of transparency, perceived selective justice, human rights concerns, emphasis on arrests over convictions, poor responsiveness, and negative social media reactions as challenges affecting the effectiveness of EFCC PR strategies. These findings suggest that perceived institutional credibility issues extend beyond communication strategies to broader perceptions of organisational behaviour. This finding is consistent with Ikenna (2023) and Dapiya and Obateru (2025), who found that institutional mistrust and perceived bias could weaken PR effectiveness in Nigerian enforcement agencies. It also supports Chiakaan and Shallum (2023), who identified a structural execution gap in EFCC PR operations. Theoretically, Meanwhile, Sharpe's Behavioural Theory provides a useful framework for interpreting the identified challenges, particularly those relating to transparency, perceived fairness, responsiveness, and stakeholder engagement. The findings therefore suggest that perceived shortcomings in these areas may have implications for institutional legitimacy and the effectiveness of the Commission's public relations activities.

Conclusion

The study found that although the EFCC employed PR strategies to promote its corporate image and mandate, public awareness of most strategies remained low, except for media engagement. This was associated with the Commission's perceived negative image and moderate public awareness of its mandate and operations. The limited application of PR strategies was attributed to perceived political influence, limited transparency, concerns about selective justice, and inadequate use of community-based and two-way symmetrical communication. The findings suggest that PR effectiveness in law enforcement institutions depends not only on message dissemination but also on organisational credibility and consistency between communication and actions. Therefore, the EFCC needs to move beyond visibility-driven communication towards trust-centred, participatory strategies that align institutional actions with public expectations.

Recommendations

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

1. The EFCC should move away from a predominantly one-way model of information dissemination through traditional media towards a two-way symmetrical model that prioritises mutual relationships.
2. The EFCC should expand its presence beyond traditional and digital media by intensifying school outreach programmes, community sensitisation, and partnerships with civil society, religious, and traditional institutions. This should include town-hall meetings, open-air campaigns in public places such as markets, and school visits to deepen awareness and improve public understanding of its mandate.
3. The Commission should prioritise professional training for its PR officers or collaborate with professional public relations consultants to improve message delivery, crisis communication management, and audience engagement.
4. The EFCC should ensure that its operational conduct aligns with its communication claims.
5. The Commission should demonstrate fairness, impartiality, and respect for human rights in its enforcement activities, as these were considered important for improving public perception and trust.

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AI Use Declaration:

The researchers used ChatGPT for brainstorming and ensuring grammatical accuracy. However, they take full responsibility for the final output.
