

Fighting Insecurity and Cross-Border Terrorism in West Africa with Public Relations: Evidence from Northern Nigeria

Emmanuel Ejiofo Nwanmuoh¹; Nduka Elda Vitalis Okolo-Obasi ²; Kobimdi Pamela Ikpo¹; Promise Adachukwu Afunnwa³; Stephen Chijioke, Mmoegbunam¹; Lovelyn Chinasa, Nnaji⁴; Anthony Tunde Ogbu⁵; and Nwabueze Chukwu⁴

¹Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Administration, Enugu Campus, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. ²Institute for Development Studies, Enugu Campus, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

³Department of Management, Faculty of Business Administration, Enugu Campus, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. ⁴Department of Accountancy, Faculty of Business Administration, Enugu Campus, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. ⁵Department of Physical and Health Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: nduka.obasi.pg82232@unn.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study assessed the effects of and potentials of public relations (PR) activities on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism. The study focused on community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeepers and intelligence gathering as proxies to measure the effect of PR in the fight. Anchoring the study on the theories of frustration-aggression, differential association, as well as the transfer process model, we generated data primarily from 1200 respondents selected using a multi-staged sampling technique. Analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics; the four objectives of the study were attained, and the research question was answered. The results from the use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of logistic regression show that Public Relations Activities (PRA) have made significant influence on community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeepers and intelligence gathering to fight insecurity and curtail cross-border terrorism. The study also confirms that PRA have enormous potential yet to be harnessed, the odds ratios are high, showing that any unit increase in PRA effort creates significant impacts on winning the fight. Therefore, the study contributes to the body of knowledge by recommending more efficient usage of PR in amending the battered image of governments of the West African nations, as well as military collaboration, intelligence sharing, and logical prosecution of suspects to enhance public acceptability.

Keywords: Public Relations, Cross-Border Crime, Terrorism, Insecurity, West Africa.

Introduction

Security of life and property of the people are the major duty of any government. James & Sarasota, (2016) asserts that ensuring freedom from danger, threat or harm is a fundamental right any state must guarantee her citizenry. To Adebisi (2020), security is very vital for the socio-economic development and sustainability of any nation.

International Center for Counter – Terrorism ICCT, (2020), Ibrahim & Nwankwo (2021), noted insecurity as a major concern in the West African sub region, pointing out that, without addressing it comprehensively, economic growth would remain elusive.

Embarrassingly, some assertions in the literature, WHO (2017), OECD/SWAC (2022), appears to be pointing out that the easiest place to die carelessly is in Africa. There seem to be many destructions on continuous basis due to insecurity ranging from intra and inter communal crises, national terrorism and natural resources crises, civil wars, to international and cross-border terrorism and banditry. Sub-Saharan African nations seem to be confused as the pointer is that many may be languishing in the fear of terrorism, banditry and other forms of violence which affect their socio-economic development (Itumo et al, 2018; Agbaje & Igbaji, 2019; Ugwueze & Chukwu, 2021). It looks like people are increasingly being confronted by a complex web of transboundary threats ranging from terrorism and banditry to cyber incursions resource-based conflicts. Famakinwa (2016) identifies several causes of conflict in Africa to include; clash of interest, social change, religious and cultural differences, political rivalry, boundary disputes, ethnic superiority, and chieftaincy disputes. In Nigeria as a case study, wanton destructions seem not to hold any fear or raise goose pimple anymore. Violent deaths appear to be counted like nothing and some quarters are beginning to make bets out of it by predicting how many more that will be reported next. (Asongu et al, 2019a). It is an ugly situation that we must acknowledge as Ukwai and Anam (2019), noted that human lives seem to be having less value in some regions compared to that of a cows. All over the nation, the issue of banditry and terrorism have created an atmosphere of fear that deters both local and international investment. To Alozie and Iwuoha (2019), investments are made to secure tomorrow, but when tomorrow is about 65% that it will not come, no sane humane will waste resources investing in such area. Currently, the northern part of Nigeria is the worst hit place, affected by both local and cross border insecurity and terrorism. To Ibrahim and Nwankwo (2021), the once secure rural and communal lives of the north has been decimated with insecurity which has claimed many lives and forced thousand off their farms and homes. Internally displaced person camps have become a normal thing and a business empire to some as many cling to the fate that a living dog is better than a dead loin. To this people being alive in the IDP camp is far better than dying in their homes and farms.

This is simply because, according to Human Right Watch (2024), Boko Haram and related insurgent groups have killed more than 15,000 civilians, abducted more than 2,500 men, women and children, including the kidnapping of 276 school girls from Chibok in April, 2014 between 2009 and 2022. Uncontrollably, the killing and kidnapping continue without end in sight instead, the centre appears to be working with ulterior political motive of recruiting foot soldiers for future Jihad wars.

To Adebiyi (2020), the kidnapping of 276 female students (Chibok girls) by Boko Haram in Borno State, sparked a global communication campaign aimed at ensuring the rescues of those girls. The campaign as noted by Sunday and Okechukwu (2014), Famakinwa (2016),

Okolo-Obasi et al (2025), was able to draw condemnation from all over the world against the terrorist group's activities showing the efficacy of public relations tools and strategies.

The Problem

West Africa sub region is extremely blessed with natural resources and can be best described as multifarious region sandwiched in-between prosperity and disorder. A region made up of sixteen states of varied territorial size, colonial history, economic strength, internal cohesion, and external linkages. Among the states are: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone who are the Anglophone part; then, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo, the francophone part, and finally Cape Verde the only country with Portuguese language as her official language. Apart from Mauritania, the remaining states are members of the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) formed in 1975 (Onuoha and Ezirim, 2013).

Between theses West Africa states exist a total of 35 international boundaries characterized by high levels of porosity. The porous borders of West Africa continue to engender cross-border crime and instability in the sub-region, owing to the lack of an appropriate mechanism for monitoring movements and illegal activities across these borders. This makes them highly vulnerable to threats such as trafficking of people, drugs, small arms and light weapons as well as recent instances of terrorism. The flow of arms and combatants, including mercenaries, across porous borders paired with the willingness of regional governments to support insurgent groups against neighbours is a dangerous combination (Kariuki, 2015; Mohammed & Faruq, 2017). These transnational threats, which are interrelated and aid one another in terms of operation within the context of organized crimes. The threats and challenges posed by organized criminal activities in the sub region have become so pronounced that experts in the field now characterize such groups as representing particular 'African criminal networks' (International Crisis Group, 2016).

As concisely captured by scholars Adebayo (2020), Olasupo (2020), Uduji et al (2024), revenues from trans-border criminal activities in West Africa alone in the area of illicit markets for drugs, sex, counterfeited pharmaceuticals and music, cyber fraud, stolen oil, and hostages offer political, military and even religious leaders a fast, easy, and relatively cost-free source of funds for their electoral and military and religious campaigns and patronage systems. Hence, it is easier and much convenient for political, military and religious leaders to offer the criminal elements protection or even access to government services from diplomatic passports to the use of the military for perpetrations of their nefarious activities. It is in the protection of such activities as opined by Nweke (2012), Afolabi (2015) that West Africa has become a showcase of arms proliferation especially in the Small Arms Light Weapons (SALW). Irrespective of the incessant and widespread misuse of SALW by state and non-state actors, enormous quantities of arms have continued to flood the region.

In the face of ineffectual national security systems, leaky borders, and budding request for arms by criminals and militants, the arms trafficking syndicates devised methods for secreting and fittingly trafficking arms across borders in West Africa. Hence, the prevalent availability of small arms, especially to abusive actors, continue to pose major threat to the security of West Africa citizenry. In Nigeria, these uncontrollable circulation of weapons across the west African border pose a great destabilizing effect on both the local and cross-border security. It has serious enabled Civil conflicts, organized crime and terrorist activities giving rise to all manners of insurgent and militant groups. Even with the same support of some religious, military and political leaders, the cross-border recruitment and operation of the terrorist groups within and outside also has security implications. For instance, it demonstrates the attempts of groups like the al-Qaeda terrorist network and its affiliates to spread their operational and human resource base within Nigeria as an anchor to Africa, and establish a coordinating point in West Africa. This is ultimately aimed at spreading Islamic extremism and global jihadist movements.

To Nwanmuoh et al (2022, 2024b, and 2025c), effective public relations campaign and reporting, transparency and open communication in mass media will significantly de-emphasize both local and trans-border terrorism in West African sub-region. While studies Farouk (2011), Ngusha and Mngohol (2015), Sulaimon and Sagie (2015), Okolo et al (2017), Ugwueze & Chukwu (2021), Nwanmuoh et al (2025), have substantiated the importance of public relations in management of crises and others Uduji and Nnabuko (2012), Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2020), Nwanmuoh et al (2023) suggested how it can be adopted in managing cross-border terrorism, there still exist the lacuna in how public relations through community engagement, youth empowerment as well as community gatekeepers affects the fight against insecurity and cross-border terrorism in Nigeria. Also, it is not yet very clear how public relations practices will affect intelligence coordination, operational interoperability and shared logistics. To this, the Nigeria Army recently averred that politicians are collaborating with the terrorists to destabilize Nigeria (Defence, 2025). There is need to establish a security outfit that will be responsible for intelligence gathering as quickly as possible in order to tackle insecurity holistically from the bottom up in Nigeria.

This study is there for contributes to the wider research on the use of public relations campaign in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism in West Africa sub-region with emphasis on Nigeria's northern region. The study report evidence based guidance and capacity building outputs based on original, context-sensitive research into opportunities in public relations campaign against the terrorism in Nigeria. The results add value to a holistic counter terrorism strategy in Nigeria by answering these four major research questions.

1. What is the effect of PR on community engagement in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of PR on youth empowerment in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism in Nigeria?
3. What is the effect of PR on community gatekeepers in fighting insecurity in Nigeria?

4. What is the effect of PR on intelligence gathering in fighting insecurity and cross border terrorism in Nigeria?

The additional contents of this paper are as follows. While section 2 looks at the literature and theoretical perspective, section 3 describes the materials and method and section 4 presents the results along with discussion. Finally, section 5 concludes the paper with policy implications and future research directions.

Literature and Theoretical Perspective

Literature Review

Public Relations (PR)

Public relations (PR) if taken in reverse will simply read relations with the public (Maclean, 2023). To Nwanmuoh et al (2025), PR centres on beneficial relationships among stakeholders (minor and major) in a community. To Okolo et al (2017), Public Relations in the context of peace remains an effective and dependable tool for conflicts and crises management at organisational, local, regional, national and international levels. Public relations have been defined in many ways by scholars and practitioners. Nwosu (2006) defined it as the "deliberate use of organized actions and persuasive communication to influence opinions and actions and by so doing, secure public sentiments or sympathy in favor of a cause". This concise formulation made by the extent and implications of the idea of public relations clear. Additional implications of the definition are that equal fulfillment of the concern of all stakeholders offered the formulation for togetherness amongst all stakeholders, which finally is the purveyor of peace. But the question is how many public relations programmes are committed to achieving a balanced and ethically motivated relationships between organizations and their public? The objective of public relations is to achieve harmony between an organization and its publics. This goes to show that peaceful coexistence is the products of successful public relations functions, a mirror of a long term mutually beneficial relationship and a stable harmony. According to Mexican statement of International Public Relations (IPRA) which states that public relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders and implementing planned programs for the benefits of the organization and its public.

The solutions from public relations are usually effective because of the integrative systemic approach it explores and exploits. It is a planned process that initiates preliminary analysis with innovative imaginations. It is not haphazardly embarked upon. Professional engagements of public relations can be summarized in RACE (Black, 1989). This translates to research, appraisal (application), communication (control) and evaluation. As research precedes all public relations activities it implies that in-depth studies of various environment shall be given thorough investigation before anything else to understand the peculiarities of each situation. Application, control and evaluation of program is continuous. This continuity sustains the dexterity of the dynamic public relations practices driving the achievement of elimination of identified problems because of the usage of edge - cutting

systematic public relations salient principles in dealing with the menace facing the society. The systematic thinking of public relations integrates total quality relations in the process of solving societal problems.

Public Relations and Community Relations

Community relations, according to public relations practitioners, Dorley and Garcia (2011), is a technique for developing mutually beneficial connections with selected groups with the long-term goal of establishing reputation and trust. According to Nweke (2012), members of the community, corporations, and other institutions within it must thus practice interdependence, cooperation, collaboration, solidarity and unification. They should also make an effort to shun all forms of selfishness by working tirelessly towards a shared objective.

Public relations practitioners, Dorley and Garcia (2011) define community relations as "The strategic development of mutually beneficial relationships with targeted communities towards the long-term objective of building reputation and trust". They argued that the development of community relations practice "was a response to the realization that companies and other organizations must obtain a license to operate". A concept based upon the written and unwritten set of expectations between organization and communities (Dorley & Garcia, 2011).

Nweke (2012) sees community relations as the deliberate effort and planned programme embarked upon by an organization to maintain a smooth relationship with the host community. Nweke (2012) notes that people who live in the community and corporate entities and their institutions within that community must, therefore, practice interdependence, cooperation, collaboration, solidarity, and unification and should strive to eschew all forms of selfishness by working assiduously towards a common goal. Nwanmuoh et al (2025) asserts that the need for functional interdependence arose from the fact that the people of the host community cannot exist successfully without the corporate entities and institutions, nor can the latter operate successfully and profitably without the former.

In essence, Nigeria society has been plagued by the problems of insecurity, banditry, kidnapping, and cross-border terrorism for many years. Nwanmuoh et al (2025) points out that several factors contribute to conflicts and insecurity problems in Nigeria, such as competing goals and interests that cannot be shared, attempts by one member of society to assume another member's legitimacy or status, inconsistent goals, growing desires for autonomy or authority among the various members of the community, a lack of resources to satisfy the necessities of the various forms of communication.

According to Albert (2012), conflicts are categorized based on the agents that caused them: conflicts arising from competition for limited or scarce resources, conflicts resulting from perceived harm to our values, which can be expressed in our inclinations towards particular objects or lifestyles, ideologies, religious beliefs, political interests, ethnic sentiments, psychological needs of individuals and groups regarding internal and external

contradictions, and manipulation of information that could be employed to provoke conflict. It is thus vital to implement public relations strategies to reduce the frequency of disputes in society since their detrimental impacts are immense and unquantifiable conflict resolution exercise to facilitate the analysis of viewpoints and perspective as a basis for identifying solution to arises and divergent points of view in both official and informal gathering (Hamisu, Muhammed, Garba & Umar, 2017).

Therefore, effective communication is crucial to tackling insecurity and cross-border terrorism and this is where intelligence gathering becomes imperative, (Nwanmuoh et al 2023). According to Gisea (2002), both war and peace have shown that disinformation is the root cause of conflict. She emphasized that misinformation, incorrect information, or missing information may result in a disparity in viewpoints, societal divergence, and greater conflict.

According to Nwanmuoh et al (2021), public relations voice is based on ethics, law, advocacy and factual communication in order to build mutually beneficial relationships with the public. Nigeria, unfortunately is fractionalized along ethnic and religious politics which some elites and politicians have exploited for their selfish gains, thereby putting the country into conflict and insecurity situation.

Community Engagement and Youth Empowerment in Fighting Insecurity in Nigeria

In security in Nigeria has become a multifaceted and deeply entrenched crisis. From terrorism in the Northeast, to banditry in the Northwest, communal clashes in the Middle Belt, and kidnappings across the country, the security landscape has continued to deteriorate. While the state has made efforts through military interventions and law enforcement, these efforts alone have proven inadequate. A sustainable solution must include community engagement and youth empowerment – two interlink strategies that place local actors at the center of peace and security efforts. Engagement can be defined as a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in something (ie, sustained attention), generating the consequences of particular attraction or repulsion force (Akhmad et al, 2020). Also, according to Vivek et al, 2020) have viewed engagement from other perspectives defining customer engagement as the intensity of the involvement and connection of a person with the organization's offerings and activities.

Community engagement can also be viewed as a process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting their well-being (World Health Organization, 2017). In security terms, it involves mobilizing local actors to contribute to peace buildings, conflict prevention, and intelligence sharing. Youth empowerment, on the other hand, involves creating enabling environments in which young people can develop skills, access resources, participate in governance, and engage in meaningful livelihood activities. Given that over 60% of Nigeria's population is under 25 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), youth empowerment is both a moral and strategic imperative in the fight against insecurity.

Community engagement as a strategy against insecurity involves early warning and intelligence sharing. Communities are often the first to observe signs of impending violence or criminal activities. Through community policing, neighborhood watch groups, and local peace committees, information can be gathered and relayed to security agencies in real time (Adebayo, 2020). Trust-based relationships between community members and law enforcement enhance intelligence quality and enable faster intervention. Youth empowerment in combating insecurity can be achieved through the following strategies, addressing unemployment and poverty, political and civic inclusion and handling of the issue of youth as peace ambassadors of the communities. Youth unemployment is a major driver of insecurity in Nigeria. Disillusioned young people are often recruited by terrorist groups, cults, and armed gangs (Alozie & Iwuoha, 2019). Exclusion from governance and civic spaces fuels frustration and political violence. Empowering youth through civic education leadership development helps build a generation that values peaceful engagement (Ibrahim & Nwankwo, 2021). Empowering youths can become agents of change. Through public relations campaigns, music, and community service, youth can promote messages of tolerance, non-violence, and unity. (International Crisis Group, 2016). However, several challenges limit the effectiveness of these strategies like lack of coordination between government, communities, civil society groups, political manipulation of youth movements and community structures, insecurity itself, which makes organizing in some communities extremely dangerous and inadequate funding for community and youth-led initiatives.

Community engagement and youth empowerment are not peripheral strategies but central pillars in the quest to tackle insecurity in Nigeria. While the military and police remain vital, they cannot succeed in isolation.

Community Gatekeepers in Combating Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity remains one of Nigeria's most persistent and complex challenges, undermining national stability, economic growth, and social cohesion. The country faces a spectrum of threats, including terrorism, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, kidnapping, and communal violence. While the state has traditionally relied on formal security apparatus such as the military, police, and intelligence services, these mechanisms have often proved inadequate in fully addressing the localized and community – based dimension of insecurity. In this context, community gatekeepers – comprising traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth and women leaders, and other grassroots influencers – have emerged as crucial actors in Nigeria's security architecture. This study explores the challenges they face, and public relations strategies for enhancing their effectiveness in combating insecurity and cross-border terrorism.

One of the primary contributions of community gatekeepers is their role in intelligence collection. Given their familiarity with the social and cultural landscape, gatekeepers are well-positioned to detect early sign of unrest or criminal activity. Their access to informal networks allows them to gather and relay information that may otherwise be inaccessible

to formal intelligence operatives. Community – based intelligence gathering is crucial in area where trust in formal security agencies is low (Alozie & Iwuoha, 2019). The challenges facing community gatekeepers can be viewed under the following headings, lack of institutional support, security risks, limited capacity, and resources, political manipulation, (Ugwueze & Chukwu, 2021, Onuha, 2019, Adam & Adeleke, 2018, Ibrahim & Nwankwo, 2021).

Community Intelligence Gathering in Fighting Insecurity in Nigeria

Intelligence gathering, also known as intelligence collection is the process of systematically collecting information about potential threats, activities, situations to understand them and make informed decisions. This information can be used for various purposes, including national security. It also refers to the essential task of collecting information from diverse sources in order to preserve life and property. Nigeria has faced a growing insecurity challenge over the past decades, including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and insurgency. These security threats have undermined national development, governance, and social stability. One critical tool in combating insecurity is intelligence gathering, which involves, collecting, analyzing, and utilizing information to anticipate, prevent, and respond to security threats effectively. This article explores the role of intelligence gathering as one its objectives in Nigeria against insecurity, the challenges faced, and recommendations for strengthening intelligence capabilities.

Intelligence gathering is vital for proactive security management. It enables security agencies to; identify and monitor threats before they escalate into violence; enhance operational effectiveness by providing actionable information for tactical planning, support decision-making at strategic and policy levels; facilitate early warning systems that can mobilize preventive responses in the community and national levels (Agbaje & Igbaji, 2019, Alozie & Iwuoha, 2019, Ohsupo, 2020).

Community engagement plays a pivotal role. Local vigilante groups, community leaders, and youth associations act as intelligence conduits by providing insights into local criminal activities and suspicious movements (Ibrahim & Nwankwo, 2021). This grassroots intelligence is often the first alert of impending threats. However, intelligence gathering in Nigeria faces significant problems like lack of trust, between communities and security agencies, limiting the flow of reliable information, poor funding and outdated equipment restrict technological intelligence capacity, inter-agency rivalry and poor information sharing weaken coordinated intelligence efforts, threats to informant's safety, as informants risk retaliation from criminal groups, corruption and politicization of intelligence undermine its objectivity and use (Ugwueze & Chukwu, 2021, Agbaje & Igbaji, 2019).

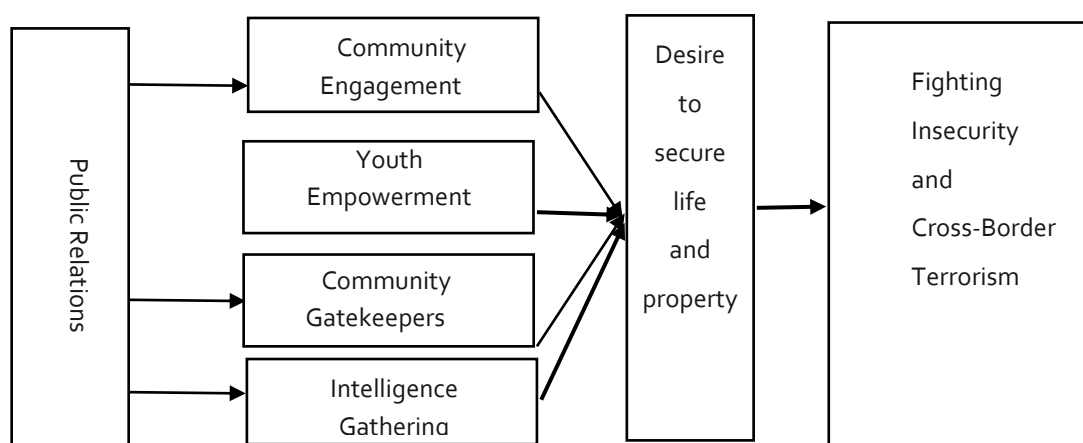


Figure 1 Conceptual Model of PR and the Fight Against Insecurity and Cross-Border Terrorism

Source: Authors Conceptual Model

National Security

When one talks about national security, the underlining issue here is the protection of a nation's core values, interests, and institutions from external and internal aggressions (Bartolotta, 2012; Kariuki, 2015). National security to Asonugu (2020b) encompasses political, economic, social, and military dimensions, ensuring the safety and well-being of citizens. In the position of International Crisis Group (2016), Ugwueze & Chukwu (2021) national security is critical to maintaining sovereignty, stability, and prosperity. In the context of trans-border crimes and terrorism, national security is compromised by the influx of illicit goods, people, and activities that undermine the rule of law and threaten the nation's stability.

Trans-Border Crimes/Terrorism

Trans-border crimes and terrorism refer to criminal activities that occur across national borders inflicting pains and terrors on the citizenry. In the west African corridors, cross-border criminal activities appear to be on the increase in the recent years. Such increase some scholars, Ukwai and Anam (2019), Momoh (2024) attribute to the rapid evolvement in technological advancement. To some scholars, Sunday and Okechukwu (2014), Itumo et al (2018) and Adebisi (2020), the advance in tech have boosted all sectors of life including criminal diversification, while to others, Sunday and Okechukwu (2014), Alozie and Iwuoha (2019), the porous borders and poor restrictions on traveling within the sub-region have serious implications on trans-border criminality. Whatever the causes may be, the bottom-line is that the drastic increase in cross-border crimes has become a serious threat to international peace and security.

Some of the cross-border crimes according to Momoh (2024) includes drug trafficking, Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, Human Trafficking, Money Laundering,

Smuggling and Vehicles theft across Nigerian Borders, Sea Piracy and other Maritime Crimes, Oil theft and Bunkering, as well as Terrorism and Trans-Border Banditry.

Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is among the most alarming form of cross-border crimes that breed terrorism which is gaining ground in the West African sub-region (Ukwayi & Anam, 2019). Though not a major hub, yet, the introduction of drugs trafficking in West Africa has been traced to Nigeria (Momoh, 2024). To Adetula (2015), arrests have been made in Chad and Equatorial Guinea of some Nigerians alleged to be dealing in drugs. The drug couriers are also on several occasions not aware as the peddlers often ask them to assist in delivering parcel to relatives on the other side of the country.

Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)

In arms protocol, SALWs entails two main classes of weapons involved in arm trade According to Momoh (2024), arms trade denotes exchange of weapons between manufacturers, middle persons and the consumers of arms. The trade is illegal when it occurs between unauthorized persons. Unfortunately, the west Africa sub-region has witnessed a whole lot of illegal arm trade fueling both internal and cross border terrorism (Adebisi, 2020). To Momoh (2024), the incessant intra, inter community and political conflicts in ECOWAS sub region has been fueling illegal arms trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the West African sub- region.

Human Trafficking

Trafficking in humans for organ harvest, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation, domestic service, and other forms of exploitative labour is another prevalent if not the fastest growing cross border criminal industry in the West African sub-region and the world at large (Alozie & Iwuoha, 2019). Regrettably, current knowledge and documentations about the trade in the West African sub region is fissured and disjointed (Asongu et al 2020c). However, the United Nations (2021) estimated that human trafficking generates approximately \$9.5 billion annually for the criminals in the business in West Africa while the ILO (2024) estimated that the industry generates about 172.6 billion from forced prostitution only around the world.

Money Laundering

Another form of cross border crime that breed terrorism is money laundering. Engaging in concealing financial transactions identity, source or destination so as to shield illegally gained money is commonly known as money laundering. This act according to Uduji et al (2024), has become grave challenge in the West African landscape. In Nigeria for instance, this criminal activity has become an elite practice for the politicians and their cronies as they syphon the commonwealth of the people. Because is the mostly the crime of the ruling class

and their recruit, most West African leader turn blind eyes to it, yet it has been a major source of fund in financing cross-border terrorism.

Smuggling

Smuggling, another violent crime (cross border trading in banned or restricted goods) is also at the root of cross border terrorism. Across the borders of the ECOWAS sub-region, smuggling of used vehicles has become is a serious menace (Okwueze, 2003). To Onuoha (2013), majority of vehicles stolen in Nigeria are often ferried to the nearest neighbors like, Benin, Togo, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, etc.

Sea Piracy and other Maritime Crimes

Another sources of crime and terror across the West African borders is piracy (robbery or criminal violence at sea). Pirates engaging in piracy off the border coast of the West African nations like Nigeria has become ubiquitous challenge in the Gulf of Guinea.

Oil Theft and Bunkering

Oil theft/bunkering in most of the ECOWAS states especially Nigeria has continued to occur at an alarming rate (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation 2023). According to Uduji et al (2021), illegal oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, has metamorphosed into a sophisticated operation that even the best brains among the youths are getting into out of frustration. A good number of studies, have highlighted the magnitude of oil theft and bunkering in Nigeria and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (2023), projected that the country loses about \$825 million annually due to oil theft and illegal bunkering.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Two theories and a model anchored this study, the theory of differential association developed in the 1930's by Edwin Sutherland, the Frustration-Aggression theory propounded by Dollard in 1960 and the Transfer Process model postulated in 1988 by Frank Jeffkins. The theory of differential association is a social learning theory which reflects on the fact that thorough association people learn criminality and not naturally born criminals. The theory emphasized that within the circle of friends and intimate peers, most crucial learning takes place with the frequency and length of association major variables in the learning process. This theory relate to the present work in that cross-border criminality and terrorism activities are usually products of close association with perpetrators. In West Africa, the flourishing of cross-border crimes and terrorism stems from rampant delinquent people in terrible need because of serious inequalities amid the rich and the poor. On the other hand, Frustration and Aggression theory as remodeled by Yotes in 1962 hypothesizes aggression to be the result of frustration. The proponents of this theory noted that when persons have tried yet their expectations and aspirations are not met, and to them efforts within their reach have been exhausted, the out of such frustration most time is aggression that lead to violence. People of most countries in West Africa and particularly Nigerians are

born and breed in frustration and have seen frustration leading to aggression. In Nigeria, the moment frustration is mentioned, the Niger Delta standoff comes to mind. Recently such could also be attributed to the incessant insurgency by terrorists in the north-western part under several names like book haram, banditry etc. To Okolo-obasi et al 2024a, the fact that most people could not apparently have their socio-economic and political dreams actualized often result to emitting their resentment through violent activities that most time spill over the borders.

The Transfer Process model postulated in 1988 by Frank Jefkins conditions that active application of public relations has the capacity of transforming *hostility* to *sympathy*, *prejudice* to *acceptance*, *apathy* to *interest* and *ignorance* to *knowledge*. PR according to this model stands as a guidepost in resolving all manners of conflict in the society. These theories and model are quite suitable for the current study due to their level of correlation with insecurity, crisis and cross border terrorism. It is certain according to Osaghae & Saberu (2005), International Crisis Group, (2016), that most conflicts and crises are as a result of peoples' frustration leading to transferred aggressions. But, the suitability of public relations in managing problems and challenges that lead to such despondency and resentment is not in doubt, it carries the capacities minimizing and containing the negative effects of conflicts in any environment.

Materials and Method

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research designs in an attempt to describe the influence of the public relations through community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeepers and intelligence gathering on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism in west Africa. We deemed the design well fitted because it is a cross-sectional study with one-off cross-sectional data that sought the respondent opinion on insecurity and cross border terrorism.

Sample Size

We used Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula to compute sample size used in the study as follows:

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

Where N stands for total or finite population of the study,
e stands for level of significance (Limit of tolerable error) and
1 is unity (constant)

$$n = \frac{10,907,606}{1 + 10,907,606(5^2)} = n = \frac{10,907,606}{27269.02} = n = 400$$

however, to ensure that the three senatorial zones of northern Nigeria are adequately covered, we multiply the determined sample size by 3 to get the final 1200 respondents sampled.

Sampling Procedure

We adopted multi-stage sampling technique (including purposive, quota, and systematic random sampling) in the study. Recognizing the three zones in stage one as North-West, North-East and North – Central we assigned them a sample quota on the basis of their population. In stage two, we purposively selected two states from each of the zones, hence, a total of six states were selected based on the perceived level of insecurity and terrorism. From North-Central (Benue and Plateau states), North-East (Borno and Yobe state), North-West (Kaduna and Zamfara). In the next stage (three), we selected three local government areas (LGAs) each from the six selected states on the basis that either the LGA is an international boundary or it has received serious security attack in the past and remains in the red flag. In stage four, we also purposefully selected the four communities on the same basis of boundary or attack frequency. Finally, in the last stage, a minimum of 15 respondents were selected from each community using simple random sampling.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were collected and used in this work, and the primary data was collected using participatory appraisal while the secondary data was generated from previous publication and used to substantiate the findings from the primary data. We used participatory technique in primary data collection knowing that the view of the respondents is vital in assessing how PR has impacted on their security through community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeeper and intelligence gathering. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument used in gathering the primary data and it was directly-administered to the respondents as a suitable tool to assess qualitative issues by quantitative information. We engaged the services of local research assistants to administer the questionnaire for the reasons that the coverage of the study is very vast and multiple languages of over 250 dialects will make it almost impossible for all the researcher to carry out the work. Also, the terrain is very unfriendly and requires detail knowledge to navigate and avoid harm and death.

Validation and Reliability Test of the Instrument

This study sees validity of an instrument from the lens of the degree to which it can capture in right qualification whatever it is meant to measure. Reliability of such instrument on the other hand according to Okolo-obasi et al (2024, 2025), is determined by the level of consistency of result obtained in using the instrument repeatedly. Therefore, we established the instrument's content validity by engaging the services of experts (scholars and policymakers) to make input both before the instrument pilot-testing and after we pilot tested it. Reliability on the other hand was confirmed after the pilot testing using 50 respondents from north central and south west with a response which was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha index of reliability that produced 93% result.

Methods of Data Analysis

Analyzing the effect of public relations on reducing insecurity and cross border terrorism, we treated the generated data with extreme and rigorous caution using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The outcome of the descriptive statistics is presented with the aid of tables, figures and charts. We also estimated, inferential statistic of multiple logistic model of estimating change in security situation as a dependent variable depending on PR through community engagement, youth empowerment, community gate keepers and intelligence gathering. The rationale behind our using logistic regression is on the basis of its modeling binary (yes/no) ability or categorical outcome. The interpretability is an inbuilt advantage as it allows as we believe that it aided us in understanding the relationships between our variables.

Other selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents were also employed. Following Uduji and Okolo-obasi (2023), Okolo-obasi et al 2024, 2025a, 2025b with the necessary modifications, we state that for binominal response variables, the logistic link is the natural logarithm of the odds ratios generally represented as follows:

$$Y = \log \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} = \log 0_i = \alpha + \beta_1 I_i \dots + \gamma_i H_i \dots + \pi_i C_i \dots + \mu \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

With equation 2, we estimated the effect of public relations on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism as follows:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{RIC_bT}) = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 \text{PRT} + \beta_2 I_2 \dots + \gamma_3 H_3 \dots + \pi_4 C_4 \dots + \mu \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

Where:

α - Vector of coefficient of independent variation, β = Vector coefficient of variables, which shows individual characteristics, γ = Vector coefficient of variables, which reveals household characteristics,

π = Vector coefficient of variables, which shows community level characteristics, Y = whether the insecurity is reduced or not i.e. 1= reduced 0= not reduced, P_i = Probability of $Y=1$ (probability of reduction in Insecurity) I = Vector of variables, which shows individual characteristics, H = Vector of variables, which reveals household characteristics, C = Vector of variables, which shows community characteristics and μ = Error term

RIC_bT = The dependent variable – attitudinal change leading to free movement of people, dropping of arm by non-state actors, reduction in cross-border crimes.

PRA = Public Relations Activities (proxies of community engagement, youth empowerment, Community gatekeepers and intelligence gathering).

*In this model, the main parameter of interest is β_1 in terms of sign and significance.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic Characteristics

We began the analysis of response with a description of social, demographic, and economic characteristic of respondents.

Analysis (Table 1) shows that for the 1200 respondents, while about 77% were males, 23% were female, this lopsidedness is owing to the fact that Muslim women hardly receive visitors. On the age of respondents, while about 15% were between 18-20 years, about 16%

were between 21 -30 years and about 10% between 31-40 years. Others are 10% that were between 41-50, 11% that were between 51 – 60, 22% between 61-70 and about 16% over 70 years of age. This shows that while 31% were 30 year or less, another 39% were more than 60 years and only 31% were between 31 – 60 years. This simply shows that the active population or the study area is not readily available, alluding to the position of Mohammed & Faruq (2017), that majority of the active population in the north are either active in militancy or are running away from home to avoid getting involved in the terrorist war or have been killed. Also, the analysis shows that, while about 9% of the respondents are Christians, about 87% are Muslims and the 5% are either traditional worshipper or belong to none.

Table 1: Socio- economic Characteristics of the Respondents (Voters)

Variables	Freq	%	Cum	Variables	Freq	%	Cum
Sex				Level of Education			
Male	920	77	60	None	380	31.67	32
Female	280	23	100	Primary	443	36.92	69
	360	100		Secondary	221	18.42	87
Religion				Tertiary	94	7.83	95
Christians	104	8.67	8.67	Others	62	5.17	100
Moslems	1041	86.75	95.42		1200	100	
ATR	37	3.08	98.50	Age of Respondents			
None	18	1.50	100	18 ≤ 20Yrs	178	14.83	14.83
	1200	100		21 - 30Yrs	194	16.17	31.00
Primary Occupation				31 - 40Yrs	116	9.67	40.67
Farming	685	57.08	57.08	41 - 50Yrs	121	10.08	50.75
Trading	122	10.17	67.25	51 - 60Yrs	136	11.33	62.08
Fishing	85	7.08	74.33	61 - 70 Yrs	269	22.42	84.50
Paid Employment	88	7.33	81.67	> 70 Yrs	186	15.50	100.00
Handicraft	164	13.67	95.33	Total	1200	100	
Others	56	4.67	100				
	1200	100					

Source: Authors' Computation

On the education level of the respondents, about 32% have not received any formal education while about 37% finished primary level of schooling and about 18% finished secondary, with only about 8% completing tertiary level of education. This shows that though literacy level has increased more than what was recorded by Osaghae & Saberu (2015), but it is still can be dubbed low. While looking at the primary occupation of the respondents we noted that about 57% are farmers, while about 10% are trader, 7% fishers and 13% artisan (Handiwork). This simply implies that about 82.67% are self-employed

while only 7.33% are in paid employment. The indication here is that majority of the people in the area are self-struggling people who are much in need of personal security to guard their lives and properties. This gives credence to Ngusha and Mngohol (2015), that if not properly handled, insecurity and cross – border terrorism will render the entire nation unproductive and less attractive for any meaningful investment from both the local and even diaspora investors.

Major Enablers of Insecurity and Cross - Border Terrorism in West Africa

Analysis (Figure 1) shows the major factors that fuel insecurity and cross-border terrorism in the coast of West Africa using example of Nigeria's Northern region. The result shows that while 25% of crisis leading to insecurity in the nations are breed in the place of religious practices. According to Adogame (2006) Nigeria and many other west African nation's politics is characterized mainly by politicization of religion and religionization of politics which is a negative energy that has continued to encourage insecurity and violence in Nigeria up till today. In Nigeria, After the killing of Muhammed Yusuf (the founder and leader of Boko-Haram terrorist group), the group carried out its terrorist attack directed at churches, mosques which houses the two major religions in the country. Since then, the violence has only escalated in terms of frequency, intensity and geographical range. Also about 20% are offshoots of ethnicity, and 15% from the greed and selfish ambition of those who think the natural resources and common wealth of the nations must be theirs alone. It is no longer a news that every crisis in Nigeria for instance must be painted with ethnic colouration. The crisis often spills over the border as cross-border terrorism due to the porous nature of the interconnecting borders, that is why about 15% of insecurity and cross-border terrorism is enabled by porous border. Others are 11% attributed to hunger and 14% to poverty.

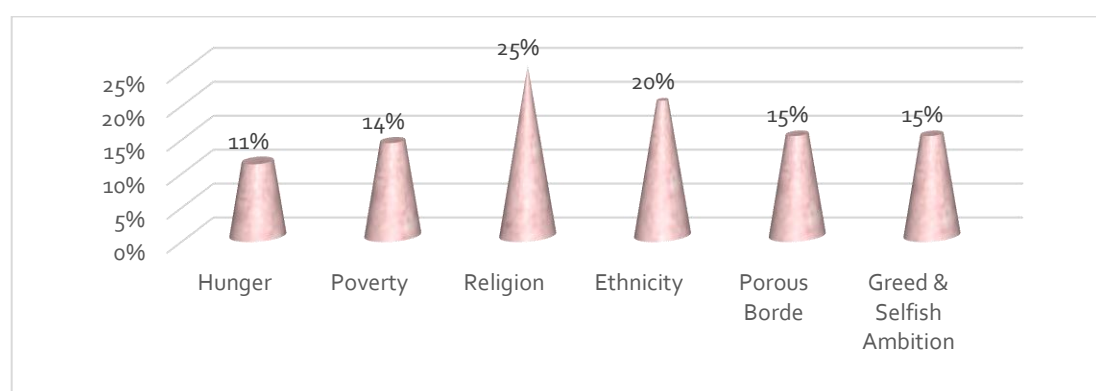


Figure 1. Distribution of Enablers of Insecurity and Cross - Border Terrorism in West Africa

Hence, poverty and hunger accounts for about 25% of the insecurity and cross-border crimes and terrorism in the region. This is not strange owing to the fact that one of the theories underlining this study of the frustration aggression theory. Mostly the youth get engaged in crimes leading to insecurity because of frustration out of poverty and hunger.

Table 2: Public Relations through Community Engagement

Statements	A	U	D	Mean	Std	Remark
The use of authentic stories from community members, local initiatives, and grassroots movements have been leveraged to create deeper, more meaningful connections with the major actors in security in the northern Nigeria.	54.25	8.05	37.7	2.51	1.12	Agreed
Serious efforts have been made by PR practitioners in community engagement to involve genuine efforts in listening to feedback and incorporating them into decision-making processes, moving beyond simple information dissemination.	34.4	15.3	50.3	2.02	0.96	Disagreed
PR activities have helped in establishing a collaborative environment where the community feels empowered to participate and contribute their quota in ensuring that insecurity and cross-border terrorism are reduced in the Northern part of Nigeria.	47.1	6.3	46.6	2.44	1.01	Disagreed
The usage of PR mechanism has helped the governments in connecting with community values and addressing pressing issues, thereby stimulating civic engagement and encouraging public participation in the fight against insecurity in the north.	51.2	16.3	32.5	2.56	0.89	Agreed
Summary	46.73	11.48	41.8	2.38	0.99	Disagreed

Source: Authors' Computation

Analysis (Table 2) portrays that on average, while about 46.73% of the respondents agreed with the four statements raised on the influence of public relations through community engagement on fighting insecurity and cross border terrorism, about 41.8% disagreed and 11.7% were undecided. The mean score is 2.38 while the 0.99 is the average standard deviation. On the basis of the Likert decision rule, we can say that the mean average is not up to 2.5, hence PR tools and strategies have not made significant impacts.

However, the result demonstrated the capacity public relations and community engagement and how it can influence attitudinal changes if well harnessed. While this appears to be supporting Nwanmuoh et al (2022), Nabuko and Okonkwo (2021), and even Uduji (2012), who opined that PR strategies seems to have no influence attitudinal changes among most Nigeria. It also lends credence to Ifedi and Ezenwankwo (2023) who averred that, appropriately executed PR strategies have the capacity to positively affect community engagement by fostering trust and transparency. With approximately 47% of the respondents agreeing with assertion, it Ozioko and Abubakar (2019), to authenticate the assertion that if PR professionals are properly engaged, PR tools have the innate ability of amplifying authentic community voices, promoting two-way communication, and driving positive social change. With about 51.3% agreeing with the fourth statement on Table 2, it

shows that if the government PR practitioners will appropriately engage with communities and demonstrate commitment to their needs, the various government tiers can build stronger, more reliable relationship based on mutual understanding and respect. This agrees with Alberd et al (2020), in that, through open and honest communication, public relations establish trust and credibility between two disputing parties.

Table 3: Public Relations through Youth Empowerment

Statements	A	U	D	Mean	Std	Remark
Effective usage of PR in the north has counters negative narratives by highlighting the achievements and positive contributions of youth, boosting their self-confidence and ambition.	58.4	8.9	32.7	2.71	1.03	Agreed
Effective PR in the north has helped to ensures that youth voices are amplified and their perspectives are considered in various societal decision-making processes. .	54.8	10.7	34.5	2.62	0.92	Agreed
Public relations has served as a bridge, connecting grassroots youth with the broader socio-political landscape to articulate their needs so as to effectively end insecurity in the north.	57.1	6.3	36.6	2.51	0.85	Agreed
Youth-focused PR campaigns in the north has encouraged civic participation by providing information and opportunities, fostering a desire to contribute to societal issues especially the fight against insecurity and terrorism.	64.2	11.5	24.3	2.53	1.09	Agreed
PR professionals have effectively use social media, digital platforms, and other youth-preferred mediums to reach and engage the youth demographic in the north in promoting positive issues concerning the fight against insecurity.	63.6	12.3	24.1	2.78	1.04	Agreed
Summary	59.62	9.88	22.42	2.63	0.986	Agreed

Source: Authors' Computation

Analysis (Table 3) reveals that averagely, while almost 60% of the respondents agreed with the five statements raised on the influence of public relations through youth empowerment on fighting insecurity and cross border terrorism, about 22% disagreed and almost 10% were undecided. The mean score is 2.63 while the 0.986 is the average standard deviation. On the basis of the Likert scale decision rule, we the mean average is more than 2.5, hence, we draw the conclusion that PR tools and strategies have made significant impacts. The finding supports Okolo et al (2017), Asongu et al (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d), in that public relations empowers youth by promoting their potential and addressing negative stereotypes, providing platforms for voicing opinions, fostering engagement with decision-makers, and building partnerships for community development. Also, the finding raises support to Uduji and Nnabuko (2012) Itumo et al (2018) Agbaje and Igbaji (2019), Nwanmuoh et al (2025) who are unanimous in agreement that with effective PR,

organisations can build confidence, inspires ambition, and creates opportunities by strategically using youth-centric channels like social media and digital platforms to amplify voices and cultivate participatory cultures, ensuring their concerns are heard and addressed in socio-political and economic spheres. With over 60% of the respondents in agreement, it shows that proper usage of PR tools and strategies in the northern part of the country is gradually offering the youth a stage to express their opinions and concerns by connecting them to policymakers and community leaders for constructive dialogue and allowing them to actively participate in shaping decisions that affect their lives.

Table 4: Public Relations and Community Gatekeepers

Statements	A	U	D	Mean	Std	Remark
PR professionals in the northern Nigeria have establish credibility and positive relationships by working with community gatekeepers, such as traditional rulers or religious leaders in the fight against insecurity	48.6	28.7	22.7	2.41	0.82	Agreed
By respecting and engaging with community gatekeepers, PR professionals in the north have gained valuable perspectives on community values, needs, and concerns, enabling the co-creation of solutions to insecurity fight.	64.2	15.3	20.5	2.63	1.12	Agreed
PR practitioners in the north has worked with gatekeepers to manage the communication of important information, ensuring it aligns with community perspectives and fosters harmony toward ending insecurity.	57.1	16.4	26.5	2.52	0.92	Agreed
Government agencies have leveraged on working with and respecting gatekeepers, to ensure the success of their operations in the community toward defeating insecurity in the north.	54.2	21.3	24.5	2.51	1.21	Agreed
Summary	56.025	20.425	23.55	2.52	1.0175	Agreed

Source: Authors' Compilation.

Analysis (Table 4) divulges that taking the average of responses, while almost 56% of the respondents agreed with the four statements raised on the influence of public relations trough community gatekeepers on fighting insecurity and cross border terrorism, about 24% disagreed and almost 20% were undecided. With the mean score at 2.52, and the average standard deviation at 0.986, we based our decision on the Likert scale decision rule, and concluded that PR tools and strategies have made significant impacts on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism. The finding is in line with Uduji et al (2025a, 2025b) in their opinion that public relations can positively influence community gatekeepers by fostering goodwill, building trust, and demonstrating commitment through community-focused initiatives and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The finding also supports the suppositions of Asongu et al (2019a, 2019b, 2019c), Ugwueze & Chukwu (2021), that

engagement with community gatekeepers, especially with influential figures like traditional rulers, religious leaders or community political leaders, allows for the co-creation of solutions, the gathering of community insights, and the management of information flow to ensure that every hand is on the desk to achieving one goal.

Table 5: Public Relations and Intelligence Gathering

Statements	A	U	D	Mean	Std	Remark
PR activities in the northern states have created cordial relationships and goodwill between security agencies and the public.	68.4	8.9	22.7	2.81	1.02	Agreed
PR professionals in the north have succeeded in encouraging residents to be vigilant and report suspicious activities.	54.8	10.6	34.6	2.52	0.96	Agreed
The usage of PR strategies in the northern states have effectively counter false narratives and rumors, ensuring that the information the public receives is accurate.	67.1	6.3	26.6	2.84	1.21	Agreed
PR strategies in the north have been playing crucial roles in establishing early warning systems.	70.2	9.5	20.3	2.93	0.89	Agreed
Usage of PR strategies have helped in repairing damaged image of the government as it builds positive reputation for intelligence gathering by	64.82	14.5	20.68	2.68	0.65	Agreed
Summary	65.064	9.96	24.98	2.76	0.95	Agreed

Source: Authors' Compilation.

Analysis (Table 5) shows the average responses as follow: while almost 65% of the respondents agreed with the five statements raised on the influence of public relations on intelligence gathering in fighting insecurity and cross border terrorism, about 25% disagreed and almost 10% were undecided. With the mean score at 2.76, and the average standard deviation at 0.95, we based our decision on the Likert scale decision rule, therefore, we concluded that PR tools and strategies have made significant impacts on intelligence gathering in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism. This conclusion is in tandem with Adam & Adeleke (2018) Adebayo (2020), International Center for Counter – Terrorism ICCT, (2020), Nwanmuoh et al (2021, 2024a, 2025b), in that in any crisis, PR helps in managing the flow of information, ensuring timely and strategic messaging to be able to stabilize the public, prevent panic, and encourage cooperation from the community to provide intelligence that helps resolve the crisis. The result depicts that proper management of PR strategies in the area has motivated members of the public to feel comfortable and willing to provide crucial information and tips to law enforcement, which is a direct source of intelligence. This supports the position of Okafor et al (2025) Nwanmuoh et al (2025) Okolo-Obasi et al (2025), that a community with high social capital is more likely to feel a sense of security and a mutual responsibility to assist agencies in maintaining order. Likewise, the finding buttresses the positions of Ngbea (2014), Mohammed and Faruq (2017), Ugwueze & Chukwu (2021), in that transparency can build

confidence in security agencies, making people more receptive to their communications and more likely to act on official warnings or requests for information. Simply put, citizens who trust security services are more likely to report potential threats or signs of unrest, providing actionable intelligence that can prevent incidents before they escalate (Osaghae & Saber, 2005; Ibrahim & Nwankwo, 2021; OECD/SWAC, 2022).

Econometric Analysis

We estimated the effect of public relations activities on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism through community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeepers, and intelligent gathering using the logit model proposed in equation 2 and 3. We tested the hypotheses at 5% significant level and all tests of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between the “Yes” and “No” impact of public relation activities (PRA) (chi square = 45.210, $p < .000$ with $df = 8$). Nagelkerke’s R^2 of .843 indicated a strong relationship between prediction and grouping. Prediction success overall was 90 percent. (94 percent for yes and 86 percent for the No).

Table 6: Summary of projected effects of PR activities on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism through community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeepers and intelligence gathering

Parameters	Community Engagement	Youth Empowerment	Community Gatekeepers	Intelligence Gathering
Coefficients	1.125	2.004.	1.436	1.925
Std Error	0.041	0.212	0.054	0.041
Significant	0.042**	0.0081**	0.031**	0.023**
Z-value	4.5	5.6	3.8	7.4
Odd Ration	3.14	13.162	8.145	14.133

*significant at 1%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 10%.

Source Authors’ Computation

The Z- value for PRA in community engagement is 4.5, with an associated p-value of 0.04. Based on the set 5% significant level, the study concluded that public relations activities have made some significant impact on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism through community engagement. On the other hand, the EXP (B) value of the Predictor – PRA for community engagement is 3.14, which implies that if the PR activities targeting community engagement is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 3.13 times as large and therefore the communities engaged will be about 3 more times likely to participate fully in the fight.

For youth empowerment, the Z- value for PRA is 5.6, with an associated p-value of 0.0081. Based on the set 5% significant level, the study concluded that public relations activities have made some significant impact on fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism

through youth empowerment. On the other hand, the EXP (B) value of the Predictor – PRA for youth empowerment is 13.162, which implies that if the PR activities targeting youth empowerment is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 13.16 times as large and therefore the youths of communities will be about 13 more times likely to desist from insurgencies and participate fully in the fight against insecurity and cross-border terrorism.

For community gatekeeper, the Z- value for PRA is 3.8, with an associated p-value of 0.031. Based on the set 5% significant level, the study concluded that public relations activities have made some significant impact on community gatekeepers in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism. On the other hand, the EXP (B) value of the Predictor – PRA for community gatekeeper is 8.145, which implies that if the PR activities targeting community gatekeepers is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 8.15 times as large and therefore the gatekeepers of communities engaged will be about 8 more times likely to mobilise the communities to fully in the fight against insecurity and cross-border terrorism.

For intelligence gathering, the Z- value for PRA is 7.4, with an associated p-value of 0.023. Based on the set 5% significant level, the study concluded that public relations activities have made some significant impact on intelligence gathering in fighting insecurity and cross-border terrorism. On the other hand, the EXP (B) value of the Predictor – PRA for intelligence gathering is 14.133, which implies that if the PR activities targeting intelligence gathering is raised by one unit, the odds ratio is 14.13 times as large and therefore the communities engaged will be about 14 more times likely to provide information to the security agencies to fully fight against insecurity and cross-border terrorism.

Generally, this study has shown that Through strategic campaigns and advocacy, PR can build crucial partnerships with stakeholders necessary for promoting security issues in west Africa. The study has shown that public relations has the capacity to help open doors to new opportunities and partnerships by showcasing youth talent and potential to key stakeholders. In line with the theory of frustration-aggression, strategic PR well-anchored will ensure transparent communication and stakeholder engagement, which are vital for program success and youth development. In support of Sunday and Okechukwu (2014), Momoh (2024), Okafor et al (2025), the study noted that by using youth-centric strategies and platforms, PR efforts definitely will become more impactful, fostering greater understanding and mutual benefit in the fight against insurgency in the borders of west Africa.

The use of authentic stories from community members, local initiatives, and grassroots movements needs to be leveraged on more to create deeper, more meaningful connections with the major actors in security. This is not odd as it agrees with studies International Crisis Group (2016) James and Sarasota (2016), Kariuki (2015) in the opinions that suitable usage of PR mechanism has helped various government in other climes in connecting with the values of communities to correctly address their pressing issues, thereby stimulating civic engagement and encouraging public participation in the fight against insecurity.

This study therefore opines that community-focused initiatives and events are the likely suitable vehicles to provide tangible proof of government's commitment in resonating

positively with stakeholders and strengthening relationships in the war and crime torn areas. Hence effective PR management with gatekeepers sincerely will continue to promotes peace and harmony within the community. And for the fact that all elements involved in the insurgencies are community members, no one else knows the community members more than the gatekeeper, and each shrine has a specific demand for a particular sacrifice, only the gatekeepers know the exact sacrifice.

Conclusion Remarks/Recommendations

In our conclusion of this study, we observed that hunger, poverty, religion, ethnicity, porous border, and selfish ambition for political power are responsible for insecurity and cross-border terrorism in the coast of West Africa. Therefore, it appears that there is a mixture of politics and religion in abetting insecurity and cross-border terrorism in Nigeria in particular and West Africa at large. Hence, this study concluded that well-packaged public relations practices targeting community engagement, youth empowerment, community gatekeeper and intelligence gathering has a huge promise for putting an end to the challenges. In addition to effective use of such PR, the challenges of insecurity and cross-border terrorism can be effectively tackled through synergy, knowledge exchange and collaboration. Also, it is imperative to initiate joint forces sponsored by the border countries of West Africa to agree on joint border patrols, and exchange of intelligence to counter the extensive terrorist networks and possibly track their sources of funding and arms supply. The Armed Forces, particularly the Airforce, can frontally improve on air security, drawing from the cooperation of their counterparts across the globe. It is imperative in strengthening collaboration in advanced Aerospace Technologies for Enhanced National and regional Security. There is an urgent need to enhance surveillance and security technologies that will be deployed to neutralize threats in rural and forested regions across the countries. The use of technological solutions would play a key role in dismantling criminal strongholds and restoring confidence among potential investors and rural farmers. The various government must as a matter of urgency invest in capacity building of both the public relations practitioners and the joint security agencies to trace, detect, analyze, freeze and confiscate criminal assets and rehabilitate the common citizens coerced or forced into crimes. Diligent prosecution to a logical conclusion of suspects, offenders or their sponsors should serve as a strong deterrent to those still wishing to engaged in criminal activities. This follows the theory of differential association, a social learning theory which reflects on the fact that thorough association people learn criminality and not naturally born criminals.

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