

# Ideological Conflict amongst Professional Bodies: Assessment of Nigerian Union of Journalist and Nigerian Institute of Public Relations' Skirmishes



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## Abstract

A recent happening in Nigerian media has revealed a long-standing ideological conflict. This conflict looms between the Journalists and Public Relations practitioners over who is qualified to be a spokesperson in a democracy. They are locked in a debate about the role of an official spokesperson in a democratic society. The journalists argue that the freedom of the press is a cornerstone of a democratic government and that journalists should always be the primary source of information. On the other hand, public relations practitioners believe that businesses and government have the right to control the narrative and should be the only official spokesperson. The paper starts with a review of the current description of the ideological conflict between journalists and public relations practitioners. The objectives of this study were to find out how the association has dealt with ideological conflict among others. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the conflict of professional ideologies in the Nigerian media. Findings revealed that efforts were made by the NIPR executives to resolve the conflict, and non-members were inducted thereby restoring peace, unity and understanding between the two bodies. The study concluded that there is need for collaboration amongst professional bodies to reduce tension in the media industry. This work contributes to the understanding of the relations between journalists and public relations practitioners. The paper recommended

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among others that media development in Africa requires ideological change through citizen-led promotion of freedom of speech.

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### **Introduction**

In an appointment made by the President of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu which took effect from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, Chief Ajuri Ngelale was appointed as Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity. This appointment raised an uproar among members of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) as the association declared that Ajuri Ngelale is not a certified member of the institute and therefore not qualified/competent to occupy that position. The law establishing the NIPR makes it a criminal offense for any individual to practice public relations without the necessary certification and licensing (Ariyo, 2023). NIPR act stipulates punishment for illegal practice including imprisonment, fine, or both.

The other perceived cause of this conflict is as a result of the discovery of some blunders made by the spokesperson when he claimed that President Tinubu was the first African leader to ring the bell at the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations (NASDAQ) during a visit to United States when former president of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete and other notable leaders had rang the NASDAQ bell before Tinubu.

The presidential spokesperson also made a similar mistake when he claimed that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had lifted the visa ban on Nigeria after a bilateral meeting between President Tinubu and UAE Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahgan. In this case, the presidency acknowledged it goofed in both instances as UAE did not issue any statement on the visa ban. Reacting to the claim of NIPR, the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the umbrella body of practicing journalists in Nigeria stressed that a situation where journalists who are its members are ridiculed for being appointed a spokesperson of state government or the presidency must not be condemned. According to the union, it is not tenable in a democracy for any law to seek to determine the qualifications or otherwise of the spokesperson of political parties, government establishments, or private companies. According to NUJ's stance, the presidential spokesperson, Ajuri Ngelale is a competent journalist whose qualifications cannot be doubted.

In Africa and Nigeria, in particular, one of the greatest challenges of professionalism is quackery. Many individuals find themselves working in different professions of which they are not trained for nor have the basic knowledge of. Public relations practice is facing this challenge of quackery as many do not consider it an area that needs expertise. Many who major in other disciplines find themselves practicing as public relations officers. Most of those who occupy the positions of public relations in both government and private organizations are not public relations major (Joseph, 2017). Individuals and organizations do not understand the concept of the profession, though they engage in it. By engaging as a public relations practitioner, these quacks display different unprofessional and unethical conducts, thereby bringing discredit to the profession. Although, some may have practiced journalism while others may not before delving into the PR profession, this however is not sufficient for an individual to excel as a public relations practitioner. According to Chike (2022), he observes that:

Daily, misfits who have no business being in the industry make all sorts of claims, including being media and public relations consultants. By claiming to be a journalist, they eventually begin to answer public relations and media consultants, as though it is an all-comers affair. Such individuals are ready to accept any kind of offer, including working as attack dogs, particularly in the political arena. (p. 63)

It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the current conflict between NIPR and NUJ over who is qualified to be appointed as the state spokesperson to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

### **Historical background of NUJ**

The Nigerian Union of Journalists was established in Lagos on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1955 and has its headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. The NUJ's birth was associated with the struggle for the independence of Nigeria. The union had some early nationalists and their writings included the late Owelle of Onitsha, the Rt. Hon. (Dr.) Nnamdi Azikiwe, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the late Sardauna of Sokoto, the late Alhaji Tafawa Belewa, the late Herbert Macaulay, and Chief H. O. Davies who with their launch of the Yoruba vernacular newspapers "Iwe Irohin ni Ede Yoruba", founded by the late Ajayi Crowther in Abeokuta in 1929 wrote powerfully, in their newspapers, columns on the need for Nigeria's self-rule. It has about 15000 members nationwide, 85 executive members, and 835 projects completed.

### **Historical background of NIPR**

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), formerly known as the Public Relations Association was established in 1963 and was renamed the NIPR in 1972. It established a National secretariat to coordinate its affairs. The body attained the status of a chartered Institute on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1990 through Decree No. 16 (Now an Act of the National Assembly). These laws empower the NIPR to register members, regulate and monitor the practice/development of the PR profession as well as monitor professional conduct, the laws also allow standard academic and professional qualifications for admissions into the institute.

The officials of the association includes the president, vice president, 22 member governing council, comprising of 17 elected and 5 federal government nominated members every two years. The president and vice presidents are elected electoral college constituted by the council to preside over the affairs of the institute. Thereafter, they are referred to as the Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively. Administratively, the council appoints a registrar, whose duty among others, is to prepare and maintain the registrar of members under the rules made by the council. The present president of the association is Dr. Ike Neliaku.

### **Ideological conflicts, media relations, and relations between journalists and public relations practitioners**

Conflict usually happens when there are opposing interests, as a result, most scholars see conflict as a clash of interests or goals between parties, which may be individuals or groups of individuals or ethnic groups or states. According to some scholars, conflicts occur "when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to status,

power, and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralize, eliminate or injure their rivals.

Conflict in most cases is seen as an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development of any society because of its destructive impact (Abbas, 2018). This therefore means that conflict must be timely averted or managed properly as failure to do so will reflect a determined action or struggle over a goal, which may be overt or subtle; manifest or imaginary. It is difficult to classify conflict categorically in Nigeria. This is because conflicts in Nigeria are not always of the same kind as can be seen from the dimensions of ideological/competence of a spokesperson to the president in Nigeria as seen between NIPR and NUJ.

Ideology comprises of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs which consciously or unconsciously reflect in understanding or misconceptions of the social and political systems of the world. The term ideology has been defined as a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones. It is credited to the French writer Antoine-Louis-Claude, Comte Destutt de Tracy (1754 - 1836), who in 1796 coined it as a label for his "science of ideas.

Professional ideology on the other hand has to do with everyday experience that members of the same occupational group tend to think and behave in certain or peculiar ways. Understanding ideology is a key to crisis and risk management.

Relations between journalists and Public Relations professionals have been the subject of various investigations. In the media industry, public relations and journalism play an important role. It is perceived that both professionals needed the expertise of each other and as a result, cannot work independently. Most scholars posit that the professional relationship between the PR practitioner and the journalist is an existing fact (Macnamara, 2014). They however hold opposing interests, aims, and objectives. It is perceived that PR practitioners and journalists have complementary roles. They have a common goal of creating a story or developing a narrative that keeps the audience/public whether viewers, readers, or listeners not just informed but well informed.

The journalist, in the democratic system of government, has the watchdog role as one of its most esteemed responsibilities and functions which could be connected to professional ideology. This is a result of its relevance in checking on established powers and scrutinizing elite behavior (Benneth & Willaim, 2005). As the backbone of journalists' professional ideology, it is now an inspiration of good practice around the world (Hallin & Paolo, 2004; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Journalist function has been defined as the manifestation of professional roles in both news decision and news outcome that reaches the public (Mellado, 2015; Hallin & Claudia, 2018). However, the journalist role has three interrelated domains consisting of six independent roles: the interventionist, watchdog, loyal facilitator, service, civic, and infotainment roles (Mellado, 2015). The American Press Institute defined journalism as "the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information." Public relations used here include roles such as corporate communication, corporate relations, and public affairs and focus is on the media relations and publicity functions in these fields of practice. Public relations believe that their main role is cultivating a sustainable strategic relationship with the diverse publics of an organization. Historically, a core activity qualifying public relations from other communication-related profession is media relations (Coombs & Holloday, 2010). Media relations aims at deliberate efforts by organizations to ensure the establishment and sustenance of cordial relationship between an organization and members of the mass

media community which is a public relations job to ensure that there is a cordial relationship between an organization and the mass media community. PR practitioners are considered useful information providers for inside, undisclosed issues (De Lorme & Fedler, 2003). For public relations, news media as one of the key stakeholders have an important role in affecting corporate reputation, investor, crisis management (Liu, *et al.* 2012) and civil litigation (Roernnolt & Studebaker, 2003).

Effective media relations are often the results of consolidated relations between journalists and of PR practitioners handling external communications on behalf of organizations. Media relations have been a major function of PR practitioners (Wilcox & Cameron, 2006) and are most visible (Supa & Zoch, 2009). According to Offonry (1985);

Media relations represent the deliberate policy, actions and varied communication activities taken by an organization to win and sustain the confidence and goodwill of the various sections of the mass media, thus removing or at least, minimizing the chances of misrepresentation, misquotation, distortion of facts and unfounded criticism of such organs (p. 4)

Baran (2004), observes that media relations requires that the public relations professional maintains good relationships with professionals in the media, understand their deadlines and other restraints, and earn their trust. Biagi (2005) adds that media relations is contacting news media, freelance writers and trade publications with the intent of getting them to publish or broadcast news and features about or originated the organizations. Similarly, Hanson (2005) states that media relations is a two-way interactions with members of the press

Hence, media relations are about the establishment and sustenance of a cordial relationship between an organization and the mass media. However, the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners is both complex and ambiguous and is characterized by both cooperation and conflict.

### **Conflict resolution**

Conflict is defined as an expression of hostility, aggression, antagonism, rivalry amidst misunderstanding, and a negative attitude (Omowale, 2008; Maise (2003). Conflicts affecting a party's fundamental needs, issues, identity, conflicting moral values, cases of justice and human rights, and distributional issues tend to be prolonged and as a result, have adverse damaging effects (Maise, 2003). Conflicts can either be constructive or destructive, depending on how it is handled. Constructive conflict may be healthy and normal in advancing better human relationships in any society. Conflict, although may occur whenever incompatible interest occurs, the management or resolution of conflict may produce a "win-win" situation, giving the parties involved a feeling of satisfaction. In other words, whether a conflict will be destructive or productive will depend on how it is managed.

However, according to Omowale (2008), conflicts can be categorized into a series of stages viz: latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and conflict aftermath.

1. Latent conflict: each incident of the conflict begins with the latent phase. Societal or organizational conflict originate from such things as competition for scarce

resources, but the conflict has not yet emerged. Latent conflict necessitates the necessary earlier conditions for conflicts in societies and organisations. At this stage, participants only anticipate conflict.

2. Perceived conflict: The cause of conflict here is due to differences in goals, mistaken beliefs, or wrong ideas of which other's true position is the root cause of the conflict here. Contests for scarce resources do not exist. Improving communication can help resolve this type of conflict.
3. Felt conflict: Conflict will not exist here until the differences are personalized or felt even though people perceive that there is a basis for conflict.
4. Manifest conflict: At this stage, the parties challenge themselves openly, there is open aggression, withdrawal, depression, complete lack of emotion, destruction etc, things that hinder societal or organizational effectiveness are exhibited at this stage.
5. Aftermath: The after-effect of conflict in a society or organization could be positive or negative depending on the way the conflict is handled or managed. If a genuine solution is proffered, it can bring a lasting solution and the parties will be ready to work with one another whether in an organization, society, nation, or internationally. If the conflict is not resolved but suppressed, the latent conditions of conflict may be aggravated and explode into more violent and serious forms.

The consequences of conflict can either be constructive or destructive, hence, it must be managed and analyzed carefully. The way a conflict is managed rather than ignored, avoided or suppressed affects significantly to the effectiveness of any society, organization and nation. It is necessary to resolve conflict because it has a way of sapping everyone's energy. To manage conflict, one has to understand and appreciate conflict, manage conflict for positive results, reduce the negative effects of conflict, and eliminate conflict.

A crisis on the other hand is an extreme situation of conflict, where critical decisions have to be taken; else the conflict degenerates to a point of extreme violence (Best, 2006). Sometimes, a crisis is an escalated state of conflict or the height of conflict, where human life is threatened, and intense violence is featured by fighting, injury, death, and displacement of people from one location to another (Best, 2006). Before a conflict turns into a crisis, some efforts should be made to manage it, most especially when the signals of crisis are noticed early enough. The crises stage may be an explosive one because it can come naturally, suddenly or by instigation, but before it got to explosive stage, there might be a trail of signals in the past. A crisis involves a loss of control, a threat to resources and people, and visible and or invisible effects on people, resources, and organization (Omowale, 2008).

### **Research questions**

Based on the objectives of this study, we ask the following research questions.

1. How has the association dealt with the ideological conflict?
2. How did they perceive the reactions, resilience and handling of the ideological conflict by their members and government?
3. What new thing is learned from the ideological conflict about the organization, its members, and the need for communication, counseling, and political influence?
4. To what extent has the association employed the best practices in crisis and risk communication in their response to this ideological conflict?

## **Methodology**

This study employed the qualitative research method, which focuses on interpretative description rather than numerical data. The study focuses on the subjective individual experiences of the participants to determine their perception and the meaning of a phenomenon or experience (Hernandez-Samplert, & Fernandez-Colltista-lucio, 2006). Using an interview guide as the instrument, the researchers used an in-depth interview as the study method to collect insightful opinions from the respondents. An intentional rather than statistical sample was selected. The interest and attitude of the participants, based on their availability resulted from their agendas. The contacts were made by members of the research team of this study. Professional journalists / public relations practitioners were interviewed. The researchers took into account the relationship between the research topic, and the profile of the participants as well as the interest in discovering a wide range of opinions. The research team made the methodology decision to interview six people. The topics discussed were based on the research questions. The researchers acknowledge the limitations of this method. The research participants were not randomly selected. Thus, the results are not generalizable. To mitigate the effects of non-randomness, we selected a wide range of people from different social, economic, ethnic, religious, and geographical backgrounds for our sample. In spite of the differences among our participants, we find some important and surprising similarities in their answers about the Ideological conflict amongst Professional Bodies: Assessment of Nigerian Union of Journalists and Nigerian Institute of Public Relations' Skirmishes and their perceptions of it. This increases our confidence that our findings are indeed representative of a broader group of people than those we were able to interview individually.

## **Discussion concerning research questions:**

### **1. How have the associations dealt with the ideological conflict?**

In response, one of the participants, a PR Executive said that the conflict on the appointment of Ngealale and the conflict between NUJ and NIPR, especially in public relations practice whereby a lot of journalists are seen taking up public relations offices in many organizations without actually identifying with the body statutorily established by law to regulate public relations in Nigeria is absurd. The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations according to her, was established in 1963 and chartered by decree 16 of June 1990. We do not just exist, we are established by law she said. That law mandates NIPR to regulate public relations practice. So, "if somebody as important as the presidential spokesperson is not a member, he is breaking the law", in as much as he is a journalist, he is not going to do the work of a journalist being the spokesperson of the president, he is going to be doing a public relations role, so it is actually a public relations office that he is occupying and not a journalistic office that he is occupying she went on to say. "He is going to be speaking as the president; reacting as the president would react, as a result, he will be doing a public relations work and not a journalistic work, he is not reporting the president, therefore, by right, he should be a member of the NIPR. It was not a matter of dragging, it is a matter of doing the right thing. He is occupying the office of the public relations person by managing the president, and speaking for the president to function in that capacity, he needs to be a member. "He should uphold the law of the country that the president swore to uphold". It is as simple as doing the right thing. It is as simple as

putting the round peg in the round hole. "Ngelale saw reasons with the NIPR and today I am glad to say that he is a member of the NIPR," she said. It is more like NIPR insisting that the right thing be done.

Another participant who identified himself as a member of NUJ in response to this question said that "NUJ felt bad especially the comment coming from NIPR. I condemn a situation whereby members of NUJ are ridiculed for being appointed as spokesman of state or federal government".

Speaking on this, the 3rd participant said that NIPR has over the years made efforts to fully professionalize the institute by ensuring that only its members can practice at any level. In achieving this, he said, "NIPR has embarked on the 'Recertification' exercise where members were screened and issued new certificates, with membership numbers on it.

In answering this question, another participant responded by saying that "the two organizations have not developed their organizations policies to the point of putting forth an argument as to who should be appointed into the office. These bodies need to stamp professionalism like the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAN) and Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

On this, one of the participant has this to say "I do not see any ideological conflict because NIPR has its established objectives and code of ethics. In some ways, it has a related task with NUJ".

Another respondent said that "theoretically, public relations is a course under mass communication. It is called marketing communication. Every student of Mass Communication or Journalism offers this course as a compulsory course. At 300/400 levels, students choose the following, print/broadcast journalism or marketing communication (PR/Advertising). Accordingly, both NIPR and NUJ are professional associations, but NUJ added trade unionism to its mandates. Membership on Nigerian Institute of Public Relations are also members of Nigerian Union of Journalists. The foremost leaders of NUJ were from public relations departments of the Ministry of Information". He said that the Late Mr. Onasanya and Sogunle were pioneer leaders of NUJ. According to him "Read the book NUJ - The History of Nigerian Press by Baba Jola Ogunlusi, John West Publications, Lagos" He went further to say that the Ministry of Information and National Orientation is the parent and coordinating hub for the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Nigerian Press Council and Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria. Public relations output he said is published and broadcast by print or broadcast media. Therefore, there is no ideological difference but mutual and collaborative work between both organizations. The major difference, he said in terms of structure is that NIPR remains a professional body, which sets or conducts examinations for its membership, while NUJ does not. Anyone working in the print and broadcast industry, paying check off dues, are automatic members of NUJ. NIPR members pay annual subscriptions.

## **2. How did they perceive the reactions, resilience, and handling of the ideological conflict by their members and government?**

Speaking on this, the respondent said that it was properly handled because the problem was identified and NIPR took steps to remedy it without blowing it out of proportion. "We have always said that we are a professional body and professionalism and excellence is our motto and the way we handled this and the reactions that are coming

from NIPR insists that we must uphold the rule of law", and it is in matters like this that the essence of upholding the rule of law comes into play. "So I appreciate the fact that the national president of NIPR saw the need to table this, instead of grumbling by the corners and wayside and complaining, he went straight to him (Ngelale) to say that as a presidential spokesperson, you should be a member of NIPR. He made his reasons known and Ajuli Ngelale conceded" With this, he is now more conscious of the fact that people are watching him, people are going to access what he does because, he is now a professional, he is now upholding the law, "so a lot is now riding on him, that is why the right thing should be done". This has prompted the drive to go after others who are unlawfully practicing public relations in the society. This we believe will help in ensuring that the law upholding the establishment of NIPR is upheld by all irrespective of cadre or status in the society. As a result of this, positive responses are seen as many people and organization are complying. "Everybody is beginning to be conscious of it, they are beginning to be awake to the fact that they will be held responsible and that they will be judged by the professional ethics that is demanded of the office that they hold".

In response to this question, the 2<sup>nd</sup> participant said that NUJ defended Ajuri Ngelale her member and urged the president to disregard the comment of NIPR.

According to the 3<sup>rd</sup> participant, actually government has been helpful as the leadership of NIPR has been battling with the unprofessional conduct of government in appointing non-professional to the position of Minister of Information both at the federal and state levels. In his words "NIPR has made frantic efforts in ensuring that the anomaly is corrected. Public debates have been organized several times to nip this situation in the bud, yet little has been achieved. NIPR claims that the image problem Nigeria is having wouldn't have happened if real PR professionals occupy the information ministry and other allied areas of government".

According to the 4<sup>th</sup> participant, there is nothing ideological about appointment in Nigeria. The president is at liberty to appoint who he can work with. The Nigerian constitution supersedes any organizational constitution. This is NIPR's claim. Section 19(1)(2) of the NIPR Acts, Cap N114, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 (The Act), will reveal that truly, any person who is not a member of NIPR and certified by it.

According to the 5<sup>th</sup> participant, there is no how the ideology of NIPR can be challenged by other organizations and members are well aware that NIPR have over 23 specializations. She said that members are also aware that one of the objectives of NIPR is to build a credible and dynamic professional institution that is responsive to Nigeria's needs.

The 6<sup>th</sup> participant responded that "NIPR leadership has always insisted that spokesperson or public relations officers must be a member of the association. But NUJ insists that as a journalist, you can be a spokesperson or public relations officer. The government inadvertently has succumbed to the demands of NIPR. Hence, some journalists are members of NIPR".

### **3. What new thing is learned from the ideological conflict about the organization, its members, and the need for communication, counseling, and political influence?**

Answering this question, the 1<sup>st</sup> participant said, "Yes, I think this is a right step in the right direction because we have always hacked on the need for government spokesperson, every PR practitioner, every spokesperson, every person that occupies the office of a PR personnel in any organization, be it government-owned or privately owned

should be a member of the NIPR”, we have an ethics and compliance committee in every NIPR chapter across the nation and the duty/responsibility of that committee is to ensure that the organizations that have a public relations department, a unit that handles public relations, their members and head are members of the NIPR, otherwise, they will be committing a crime, breaking the law and will be termed a quack, she said. The participant went further to say “It’s not just being a member to pay your dues or attend meetings, but to build your capacity because there is so much in that office of the PRO and you need to be able to stand up to the responsibility that is demanded of you. When you attend meetings, you rub your minds, there are training packages, lectures, and a lot of things that would help you in discharging your duties responsibly”, that is why you need to be in the right place. “Like we always say, when you get to the hospital, you will always want qualified medical personnel to attend to you because your health is your life, so also, for the organization, you want the public to have the best perception of what your organization is all about and you cannot afford to have quacks speaking on your behalf, representing you, speaking and painting a picture of you to the public because you want to stay in business, and make a profit”. I will therefore say that this has birthed a new beginning, she acknowledged. Ngelale has complied. The Minister of Information she said, is a member. According to her, “in Rivers State, we are going after the Commissioner of Information because he needs to be a member of NIPR. In Akwa Ibom State, the Commissioner for Information is already a member of NIPR, so they are in the right direction/path and you can see that professionalism is demanded of you.

Another participant said the NUJ made NIPR know their boundaries. It informed the NIPR that journalists are eminently qualified to speak for their principals and should be allowed to do their jobs without unnecessary distraction.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> participant in responding to this question said that “organizations that hire professional PR persons will be far from image problems. Journalists only know how to write but can’t manage crises, but a PR professional is an embodiment of the two. A PR professional does not only manage the organization but manages the community, advises appropriately and influences government policies through the professional ways of handling sensitive issues. So, a PR person is an all-around crisis manager, counselor, and image maker who can influence policies.

The 4<sup>th</sup> participant said that the new thing there is that professional bodies should strengthen their ideologies in line with Federal laws.

According to the 5<sup>th</sup> participant, on this, she said “NIPR is a specialized institution and to be a qualified member, you must be certified in order to enhance the image of public relations in Nigeria”.

Responding to this question, the 6<sup>th</sup> participant stated that “The membership recruitment of NIPR stands out. They are gaining more members, while NUJ is losing membership due to lack of focused leadership”.

#### **4. To what extent has the association employed the best practices in crisis and risk communication in their response to this ideological conflict?**

According to one of the participants, “Let’s take a look at the approach that the NIPR national took, they identified the problem, and that is one of the key things in public relations especially when it has to do with crisis management. There was a problem, the presidential spokesperson was not obeying the law that established the NIPR, he was found guilty of it, because, if he should be a presidential spokesperson, he needed to be a

member of NIPR. The problem was identified, steps were taken to address it, a formal meeting with him was organized, he was told or reminded of what the law says, he read it and agreed with it and decided to be a member, that was a conciliatory way of solving that situation that came up. The national didn't call for his sack or termination, which would have been an improper way and that, is how we are going to win this war by saying the truth, and laying the fact before the public". This is the law, it is not NIPR that made the law, it was the law that was made even before we became members the participant said. For every crisis, there are different approaches to it. NIPR brought that professionalism in addressing this issue. When the correction was made, it was celebrated; it's not just pointing out the wrong, and correction made, but it also entails celebrating the person when he takes the correction. "When Ngelale became a member of the Abuja chapter of the NIPR, it was celebrated". For every government, there will always be crises and that is why we need professionals because the way professionals will handle the crisis will always differ from the way an unprofessional person will handle it. "We need professionals to handle crisis. So many things happen in our country and we see that professionals are not handling public relations. It's so glaring, that many captains of industry talk anyhow because they are not properly guided and advised". The professional touch is not seen in the way they respond to things, and the way they respond to crisis when it occurs. That is why this cry will always be there. "Each crisis requires that professional touch that is unique to it and that is why we call people that are into public relations practice not to practice in isolation; join the NIPR because that is the place you should be to build your capacity the more. By so doing, you will know more, share what you know, and rob minds with others. This helps improve and sharpen your knowledge, you also get to know a deeper dimension to and of the things you think that you know. She went further to call on all public relations practitioners and journalists who want to become public relations practitioners, not to just assume that they know it all because public relations and journalism are not the same". If you want to join the public relations practice, come and join the NIPR, she said. "You can be a member of NUJ and also be a member of the NIPR. I think that you are better off for it because no knowledge is lost. It is a win-win situation. I don't see why there should be a conflict. We are two sides of a coin. Your knowledge as a journalist would help you to know that this is how the journalist should come with their question and this is the angle they are going, and then from the lens of public relations, you know how to counter it, so it's a win-win situation. We should work together and should not work against each other and not be at cross purposes". A public relations practitioner who wants to do the work of a journalist, might end up doing promo. Somehow it is suspected. "So, let the journalist do the journalist work and the Public relations practitioner do the public relations work". If you are a journalist and you want to function as a PR practitioner, come and learn the rudiments so that you are not writing a press release as a news story. There is a difference between a press release and a news story. The more the merrier, it is better for the public relations person to understand journalism and for the journalist to also understand public relations. Your organization and you will be better for it, the participant said. "A journalist is a journalist, he is reporting. The public relations person wants to give information out to the public, that will best represent his/her organization. Everybody wants to put their best foot forward, whether it is a disaster that happens, the public relations practitioner still wants to put his best foot forward, the journalist wants to report that incident that has happened, he has to report the truth, the fact as they are".

The journalist will report what he has seen, heard and he will attribute his story to a source, which is the public relations person.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> participant, in response to this question said that to a great extent, members of NUJ are always encouraged to upgrade and improve on their educational levels and as well as abide by the ethics of the profession. This he said is because, observing the rules is the key to success.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> participant in response to this question said that a journalist cannot perform the functions of a public relations officer but a PR person can do the job of a journalist because one of the prerequisites for being a PR professional is the ability to write vociferously and relates well with the public (both internally and externally). So in achieving this, he said "the onus lies on the NIPR to picket various organizations in ensuring that round pegs are being put in the round hole. They should ensure that employers recruit real professionals who are up to the task and not journalists in the alternative. NIPR is doing enough by organizing up-to-date training programs like the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) and other training programs. If employers of labour at all levels employ professional PR persons, there wouldn't be any ideological conflict anywhere. The bulk of the problems come from employers. Another step employers of labor should take (both public and private) is that they should be at par with their colleagues in other professions ICAN, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), and so on. Doing this will bring sanity to the PR profession and erase all kinds of ideological conflict."

The 4<sup>th</sup> participant responded by saying that the two bodies have been working together to strengthen relationship. He went further to say that "I also perceive some political contractors and distracters at work in the appointment.

The 5<sup>th</sup> participant responded by saying that "NIPR are always in both electronic and print media to set their goals straight. It has been drummed into the ears of those practicing PR without the basic qualifications to carry out certifications as they stand the risk of prosecution. NIPR is established by law and to employ best practices, it must act by the established rules".

The 6<sup>th</sup> participant said that "In Mass Communication Departments across tertiary institutions, communication crisis management is another core course that ensures that journalists and public relations officers understand best global practices and use it for value addition on their schedules as appropriate".

### **Conclusion**

The relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners has been hotly debated in the face of communication studies. Though the NUJ and the NIPR objectives are complimentary, they are only partially so. The disagreement between the two bodies has sparked concern as both bodies strive to assert their belief and establish their dominance. However, amidst the conflict, there is hope for resolution and collaboration with both parties showing willingness to engage in dialogue and find common ground. This will not only resolve the conflict but pave the way for smoother functioning and better collaboration between the two associations in the future, which is crucial for a democratic society and the media industry to function effectively. Findings revealed that efforts were made by the NIPR executives to resolve the conflict, thereby restoring peace, and unity and understanding between the two bodies. Findings revealed some element of conflict and cooperation in the relationship between journalists and public relations

officers as negotiation existed between the two parties to resolve the conflict despite their divergent interests. Nonmembers of NIPR were enrolled. This is a display of attempts by both Associations to resolve the issue which is seen as a sense of collaboration and accommodation, as ignoring it and not confronting the issues might have negative impacts. There is a need for collaboration amongst professional bodies to reduce tension in the media industry. Collaboration should be encouraged. This is important to foster unity amongst professional bodies. It is therefore concluded that in resolving conflicts, collaboration, willingness, cooperation, dialogue, understanding and accommodation by both conflicting parties are key elements that should not be ignored. These are necessary ingredients to restoring peace in any conflict or crisis.

### Recommendations

1. Strict adherence to the ethics of the profession.
2. Creation of a committee to determine the qualifications and responsibilities of a spokesperson in a democracy.
3. Media development in Africa requires ideological change through citizen-led promotion of freedom of speech.

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