

**IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF HOLY  
CROSS PRIVATE HOSPITAL, IBUSA, DELTA STATE**

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**OCTOBER, 2024.**

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**BEING A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS  
COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF  
ARTS (M.A.) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

**OCTOBER, 2024.**

## **DECLARATION**

**I, IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF HOLY CROSS PRIVATE HOSPITAL, IBUSA, DELTA STATE**, declare that this work entitled “**IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF HOLY CROSS PRIVATE HOSPITAL, IBUSA, DELTA STATE**” was written by me and is a result of my research effort under the supervision of Prof. M. Okhaku. I further wish to declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief, this work has not been previously presented in any form whatsoever for any application for a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Mass Communication or the award of any other degree elsewhere.

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this Masters Degree (M.A) dissertation was done by **MARY JANE OGORCHUKWU ELUMELU** in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria under the supervision of Prof. M. Okhaku.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty.

**CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION ON PLAGIARISM**

We the undersigned attest and declare that the dissertation of Miss Mary Jane Ogorchukwu Elumelu titled **IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF HOLY CROSS PRIVATE HOSPITAL, IBUSA, DELTA STATE**, has successfully passed the plagiarism test, and does not violate any copyright regulations.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the impact of public relations (PR) strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa on the institution's image and reputation within the local community. The study's key objectives were to assess the hospital's current PR strategies, examine their influence on local perceptions, and evaluate the overall impact on the organization's image building and reputation. More so, the study had two hypotheses which were tested using Chi-square. Anchored on the Image Repair Theory and the Stakeholder Theory, the research adopted a survey research design and utilized a structured questionnaire to gather data from a representative sample of Ibusa residents. The findings reveal that Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa's public relations efforts have been largely successful in enhancing the institution's standing, trustworthiness, and performance within the Ibusa healthcare market. Specifically, the hospital's strategic communication, community engagement initiatives, and proactive media relations activities were found to have positively shaped the local community's views and impressions. Based on these insights, the study recommends that the hospital management conduct a thorough audit of its existing PR approaches, evaluating the effectiveness of current communication channels, media engagement practices, community outreach programs, and the overall coherence and impact of the institution's public relations initiatives. By optimizing its PR strategies, Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa can further strengthen its position, bolster its reputation, and better serve the evolving healthcare needs of the Ibusa community.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Public relations play a vital role in managing the image and reputation of organizations across various industries, including the healthcare sector. In the highly competitive healthcare landscape, private hospitals rely on public relations strategies to shape public perception, build trust, and establish themselves as reputable healthcare providers within their communities. Public relations, as defined by Grunig and Grunig (2017), is the management of communication between an organization and its publics to foster mutual understanding and positive relationships. In the context of healthcare, public relations involves strategic communication, relationship building, and reputation management with various stakeholders, including patients, healthcare professionals, media, and the local community.

According to Okorie, Ike and Oduah (2018), public relations in healthcare facilitates effective communication, builds trust and ensures the dissemination of accurate and timely information to the public. It helps hospitals establish credibility, counter negative perceptions, and enhance their overall reputation. Effective public relations practices are essential for hospitals to maintain a positive image and reputation. As noted by Ojemeni and Ujumadu (2018), public relations strategies aid in creating a favorable perception of the hospital's values, services, and commitment to patient care. Through strategic communication efforts, hospitals can highlight their unique offerings, quality healthcare outcomes, and community involvement, thus influencing public opinion and building a positive reputation.

Public relations also plays a crucial role in managing crises and addressing negative events. According to Oyedele and Mbanisi (2018), hospitals must be prepared to handle crisis situations effectively to protect their image and reputation. Public relations professionals are instrumental in

developing crisis communication plans, providing timely and accurate information to the public, and managing media relations during challenging times. By effectively addressing crises, hospitals can mitigate reputational damage and maintain public trust.

Additionally, public relations activities contribute to community engagement and relationship building. As discussed by Emejulu and Uzoeshi (2018), hospitals that actively engage with their communities through outreach programs, health campaigns, and partnerships foster positive relationships and increase their visibility. Through these efforts, hospitals demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of the community, which enhances their image and reputation as trusted healthcare providers.

The essence of building the reputation and image of healthcare institutions cannot be overemphasized. This is because they are paramount in establishing trust, influencing the patients choices and decisions, and nurturing positive relationships with diverse stakeholders. As a salient healthcare institution, Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, provides a wide range of medical services to the local and state community. As one of the oldest and prominent hospitals in Ibusa, they have gained society's support and admiration. However, in an era characterized by intensifying competition and heightened public scrutiny, it becomes imperative for Holy Cross Hospital to effectively manage and cultivate a positive image that instills confidence among patients, healthcare professionals, government agencies, and the broader community.

A strong and positive image holds immense importance for healthcare institutions due to its influence on patient's decision-making, staff morale, and stakeholders engagement. Consequently, effective public relations strategies can empower Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa to proficiently communicate its mission, values, and accomplishments to key stakeholders. By

doing so, the organization can foster trust and credibility, maintain a positive image and favorable perception among stakeholders, thereby bolstering its reputation.

Through this study, a comprehensive analysis of the public relations practices and strategies employed by the Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, was conducted. This analysis encompassed an evaluation of internal and external communication practices, media relations, community engagement initiatives, and stakeholder perceptions. By examining the current state of public relations practices and strategies used within the Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, this study aims to identify areas that require improvement and develop recommendations to enhance the organization's image and reputation.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, Delta State, has maintained its fame and relevance in the community throughout the years. Although, there has been a problem with maintaining a good image and reputation because of subsequent accusations that have arisen in relation to the high death rate happening in the hospital. Some patients have raised concerns on how the death rate keeps increasing and how it could be because of so many factors, ranging from unprofessional healthcare workers to poor public relations practices and strategies. However, there is a dearth of research exploring the specific impact of public relations on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, despite the critical role of public relations as a strategic communication discipline in shaping perceptions and enhancing the reputation of healthcare organizations. Consequently, there is a pressing need to bridge this gap in understanding and ascertain how public relations strategies can be effectively optimized to improve the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa. As such, this study aims to address the following problem statement: To what extent do the public relations strategies implemented by the Holy

Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, effectively shape stakeholder perceptions, enhance the organization's reputation, and develop trust among patients, healthcare professionals, government agencies, and the wider community?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The aim of this study is to find out the impact of Public Relations on the Image and Reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa. However, this study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Assess the current state of public relations strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa.
2. Examine the influence of public relations practices by Holy Cross Private Hospital on Ibusa residents' perceptions of the hospital
3. Evaluate the impact of public relations strategies on the image building and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study was anchored on the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of public relations strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital in Ibusa, Delta State?
2. How do the public relations practices implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital influence the perceptions of the hospital among residents in Ibusa, Delta State?
3. What is the impact of public relations strategies on the image building and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital in Ibusa, Delta State?

### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

This study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. Public relations practices have no significant influence on the perceptions of Ibusa residents.
2. There is no significant impact of public relations strategies on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study will be significant to the following stakeholders in the following ways:

**1. Holy Cross Private Hospital:** The findings of this study will provide valuable insights to the hospital management regarding the effectiveness of their current public relations strategies. For example, if the study reveals that the hospital's public relations efforts are positively influencing the image and reputation of the hospital, the management can be reassured that their strategies are effective. On the other hand, if the study identifies areas for improvement, the hospital can make informed decisions about modifying its public relations practices to enhance its positioning, attract more patients, and build stronger relationships with stakeholders.

**2. Patients and their families:** The study will benefit patients and their families by providing them with information about the hospital's reputation and image. For instance, if the study finds that Holy Cross Private Hospital has a positive image and reputation, patients and their families can have confidence in the quality of healthcare services offered by the hospital. This can influence their decision-making process when choosing a healthcare provider. Additionally, the study can help patients and their families understand the hospital's commitment to patient care and its track record in delivering satisfactory outcomes, leading to increased patient satisfaction and loyalty.

**3. Healthcare professionals:** The study's findings will be beneficial to healthcare professionals associated with Holy Cross Private Hospital. It can shed light on the impact of public relations on the hospital's reputation, indirectly influencing the professional reputation and career prospects of healthcare professionals working at the hospital. For example, if the study reveals that the hospital

has a strong reputation, it can positively impact the professional standing of healthcare professionals working there. This can facilitate career growth opportunities, recognition, and the attraction of talented professionals to the hospital.

**4. Referring physicians:** Referring physicians play a crucial role in recommending hospitals to patients. The study's findings will provide insights into how public relations strategies influence the perceptions of Ibusa residents. Positive findings can strengthen the hospital's reputation among referring physicians, leading to increased referrals and collaboration with the hospital. Referring physicians can have confidence in referring their patients to Holy Cross Private Hospital, knowing that the hospital has a strong positive image and reputation within the community.

**5. Local community:** The study will benefit the local community in Ibusa by providing information about the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital. Positive findings can enhance community trust and engagement with the hospital. For example, if the study reveals that the hospital actively engages with the community through outreach programs, health education initiatives, and partnerships with local organizations, community members will view the hospital as a trusted and valuable healthcare resource. This can lead to increased utilization of the hospital's services, community support, and a sense of pride among community members.

**6. Insurance providers:** Insurance providers are another important stakeholder group that can benefit from this study. The study's findings can inform insurance providers about the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital. For example, if the study demonstrates that the hospital has a positive reputation for delivering quality healthcare services, insurance providers may consider including the hospital in their network of preferred healthcare providers. This can lead to increased patient referrals and collaborations between the hospital and insurance providers.

**7. Government and regulatory bodies:** Government and regulatory bodies in the healthcare sector can also benefit from this study. The findings can provide insights into the effectiveness of public relations strategies in private hospitals, such as Holy Cross Private Hospital. This knowledge can inform policy-making decisions and regulatory frameworks related to public relations practices in healthcare organizations. Government and regulatory bodies can use the findings to encourage the adoption of effective public relations strategies and promote a positive image and reputation among healthcare providers.

**8. Future researchers and academia:** This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on public relations in the healthcare sector, particularly in the Nigerian context. The findings and recommendations can serve as a valuable resource for future researchers and academia interested in studying the impact of public relations on the image and reputation of private hospitals. It can inform future research directions, provide a foundation for further exploration in this field, and potentially lead to the development of best practices and guidelines for public relations in healthcare organizations.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The geographic scope of this study is focused on Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, Delta State, Nigeria. Ibusa is located at Oshimili North LGA of Delta State, located in the southern region of Nigeria. Through concentrating on Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, this study aims to gain insights into the public relations strategies and their impact on the image and reputation of this specific healthcare institution within the local context. Analyzing the public relations practices and strategies within this specific geographic context will provide valuable insights into how Holy Cross Private Hospital can effectively engage with its local community, patients, healthcare professionals, and government agencies to enhance its reputation and image.

Conversely, the contextual scope of this study is focused on the impact of public relations strategies on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa. Public relations plays a vital role in shaping perceptions, fostering trust, and establishing credibility for healthcare organizations. Via examining the specific context of the Holy Cross Hospital, this study aims to understand the effectiveness of public relations strategies in influencing stakeholder perceptions within a local healthcare setting. The findings will provide context-specific insights and recommendations that can be utilized by Holy Cross to enhance its public relations practices and strategies and strengthen its image and reputation within the Ibusa community and at large.

### **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

The following terms have been defined based on their contextual usage in this study:

**Communication:** This refers to the process of exchanging relevant and accurate information between Holy Cross Private Hospital and its stakeholders through various channels and mediums. Effective communication aims to promote understanding, build relationships, and shape perceptions of the hospital.

**Image:** This is the perception and impression that individuals hold about Holy Cross Private Hospital, including factors such as physical appearance, brand identity, service quality, patient experiences, and overall reputation in the community.

**Impact:** This is the influence or effect that public relations strategies and practices implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital have on shaping the image and reputation of the hospital. It refers to the extent to which public relations efforts contribute to positive or negative perceptions among stakeholders.

**Perception:** This refers to the subjective interpretation and understanding of stakeholders regarding Holy Cross Private Hospital's image and reputation, influenced by individual

experiences, beliefs, and knowledge. It encompasses how stakeholders perceive the hospital's quality of care, professionalism, accessibility, responsiveness, and overall value.

**Public:** The specific groups of individuals or communities who have an interest or are affected by the activities and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital. This includes patients, healthcare professionals, referring physicians, employees, government agencies, media outlets, and community organizations.

**Public Relations:** The strategic communication and relationship-building activities undertaken by Holy Cross Private Hospital to manage and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders. This includes media relations, community engagement, crisis communication, internal communication, and reputation management.

**Reputation:** The collective assessment and evaluation of Holy Cross Private Hospital's character, credibility, and trustworthiness. It reflects the hospital's past performance, consistency in delivering quality healthcare services, patient satisfaction, and stakeholder perceptions of the hospital's values, ethics, and commitment to patient care.

**Reputation Management:** The proactive and systematic efforts by Holy Cross Private Hospital to shape, maintain, and enhance its reputation among stakeholders. It involves monitoring and addressing perceptions, managing crises and issues, leveraging positive achievements and feedback, and aligning communication and actions with the desired reputation.

**Reputation Repair:** The actions and strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital to address and recover from a damaged or negative reputation. It includes acknowledging and rectifying mistakes, communicating transparently about corrective actions, demonstrating accountability, and rebuilding trust with affected stakeholders.

**Stakeholders:** The individuals and groups who have a vested interest or are directly affected by the operations and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital. This includes patients, their families, healthcare professionals, referring physicians, insurance providers, government bodies, and the local community.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Preamble**

This chapter examines the concepts, literature, empirical studies and theories related to the current study.

#### **2.2 Conceptual Review**

##### **2.2.1 Public Relations**

Establishing benevolence and rapport between institutions, organisations, or individuals and other institutions, specific publics, or the community at large are the primary objectives of public relations. This is achieved via the distribution of scholarly materials, the promotion of amicable discourse, and the assessment of public sentiment. Johnston and Zawawi (2004) define public relations as the ethical and strategic administration of connections and correspondence with the aim of establishing partnerships, devising policies, identifying and resolving issues, and crafting messages that generate favourable outcomes while upholding a sense of social accountability.

Nwodu (2006, p. 1) defines public relations as "the intentional use of coordinated actions and persuasive communications to sway public sentiments or sympathy in support of a cause through the manipulation of opinions and actions." However, it is worth noting that the definitions provided above encompass a spectrum of complexity. Due to the fact that the criteria were formulated beyond the confines of corporate structure, they were regarded as practical definitions for evaluating public relations practise. This implies that limitations on public relations activities extend beyond the realm of business.

Public relations (PR) refers to the administration of information flow between an entity or individual and the general public (Asemah & Edegoh, 2014). Maintaining a positive image and establishing strong relationships with the target audience of an organisation are the objectives of public relations. This strategic communication approach has the potential to foster partnerships that are advantageous for both organisations and their audiences (Omoruyi, 2011). Public relations can be utilised to increase brand recognition, generate positive press, and manage reputation. Additionally, it can be employed to influence public policy, shape public sentiment, and foster an environment that is favourable to the functioning of an organisation. PR professionals employ various tactics, such as content marketing, social media, crisis communication, and media relations, in order to achieve their goals (Asemah, 2011)

Establishing and maintaining relationships between a company and its audiences is what public relations essentially does. Both the organisation and its audiences are engaged in this reciprocal exchange. It is imperative for the organisation to be receptive to public feedback and willing to address their desires and apprehensions. Additionally, the general public must be receptive to the group's discourse and able to understand its goals and objectives (Oladimeji, 2013). A positive perception of an organisation and its products or services is what public relations seeks to establish. A multitude of approaches are employed to accomplish this, encompassing special events, public speaking, media relations, and social media. Public relations professionals employ these tactics in order to cultivate a positive image of the organisation and its products and services (Ibe & Eze, 2011).

Public relations encompasses the management of the relationship between an organisation and its audiences. This involves maintaining an awareness of the desires and needs of the general public and addressing them efficiently and promptly. Public relations professionals must possess

the capacity to identify potential challenges and devise strategies to address them (Ibe & Eze, 2011). The entirety of a company's communication strategy should consist of public relations. It generates favourable impressions, promotes healthy relationships, and facilitates problem resolution. In order to interact effectively with the organization's audiences, public relations professionals must be knowledgeable about both. Additionally, it is imperative that they adopt an innovative and calculated approach to public relations.

### **2.2.2 Image Building**

Image building refers to the strategic process of shaping and cultivating a desired perception of an organization among its stakeholders through deliberate communication and actions. According to Smith (2018), image building involves the intentional and planned efforts of an organization to create a positive and favorable perception among its stakeholders. It encompasses a range of activities, such as developing a distinctive brand identity, crafting key messages, implementing marketing and communication campaigns, and engaging in community initiatives. The goal is to shape stakeholders' perceptions by consistently conveying positive attributes and values that align with the organization's desired image.

Also, image building can be defined as the systematic approach taken by an organization to establish and maintain a positive reputation by effectively managing its communication, relationships, and experiences with stakeholders. In the view of Johnson and Brown (2017), image building involves the strategic management of an organization's reputation through various means, including communication, relationship-building, and stakeholder experiences. It encompasses activities such as proactive media relations, transparent and timely communication, fostering positive relationships with stakeholders, and ensuring consistent delivery of high-quality products

or services. The aim is to create a favorable image that engenders trust, credibility, and positive associations with the organization.

More so, image building refers to the intentional efforts made by an organization to shape stakeholders' perceptions by consistently projecting a positive and authentic identity that aligns with its values and goals. According to Thompson (2016), image building involves the conscious actions taken by an organization to establish and maintain a coherent and authentic identity that resonates with stakeholders. This includes activities such as developing a strong corporate culture, showcasing organizational values through visible actions, engaging in corporate social responsibility initiatives, and ensuring consistency between the organization's words and deeds. The objective is to build a trustworthy and credible image that stakeholders can identify with and support.

We can also define image building as the strategic process of creating and managing a positive and distinctive reputation through effective storytelling, brand positioning, and engagement with stakeholders. As proposed by Davis and Clark (2018), image building encompasses the deliberate and strategic use of storytelling, brand positioning, and stakeholder engagement to shape an organization's reputation. It involves crafting compelling narratives that highlight the organization's unique attributes, communicating these stories through various channels, and actively engaging with stakeholders to build meaningful relationships. The aim is to create a positive and memorable image that differentiates the organization from its competitors and resonates with stakeholders.

Furthermore, image building is the deliberate and continuous effort of an organization to shape stakeholders' perceptions by effectively managing its communication, reputation, and public interactions. Roberts (2019) sees image building involves the ongoing management of an

organization's communication, reputation, and public interactions to influence stakeholders' perceptions. It includes activities such as strategic media relations, crisis communication, reputation monitoring, and public engagement. The objective is to build a positive image by maintaining transparency, addressing concerns promptly, and consistently delivering on promises, thereby fostering trust and credibility with stakeholders.

### **2.2.3 Reputation Management**

Reputation management is a strategic and systematic effort undertaken by organizations to shape, monitor, and enhance their public perception and credibility, while effectively managing potential risks and challenges. According to a study by Adekunle and Nwankwo (2018), this proactive approach aims to establish a positive and trustworthy image among stakeholders. Organizations engage in activities such as monitoring public sentiment, promptly addressing negative feedback or crises, actively engaging with stakeholders, and consistently delivering on promises. By effectively managing their reputation, organizations can build credibility, trust, and a positive perception among their target audiences.

Okoro and Okafor (2017) see reputation management as a strategic process that involves monitoring, evaluating, and influencing the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders about an organization. The objective is to build a strong and favorable reputation. This approach entails gathering feedback, analyzing reputation drivers, and implementing strategies to positively influence stakeholder perceptions. By actively managing their reputation, organizations can mitigate potential reputational risks, build trust, and enhance their overall standing in the eyes of stakeholders.

Also, Ibrahim and Adebayo (2018) portrays reputation management as a comprehensive and proactive approach. It involves managing an organization's actions, communication, and

stakeholder relationships to ensure the establishment and maintenance of a positive and respected reputation. This approach aligns organizational actions with stated values, maintains transparent and effective communication, and fosters positive relationships with stakeholders. By consistently managing these aspects, organizations can cultivate a strong and respected reputation that positively influences stakeholder perceptions and behaviors.

Reputation management, as described by Adesina and Ogbonna (2018), is seen as a deliberate and strategic effort to protect, enhance, and repair an organization's reputation. This involves employing effective communication strategies that promote transparency, engaging stakeholders in meaningful ways, and adhering to ethical standards. Activities such as crisis communication, reputation repair, and establishing strong relationships with stakeholders are key components. By practicing effective reputation management, organizations can safeguard their reputation, recover from setbacks, and maintain stakeholder trust and support.

More so, for Ogunleye and Oluwaseun (2018), reputation management is an ongoing process where organizations actively monitor and shape their public perception. This involves continual assessment of reputation, development of messaging, and implementation of strategies to enhance reputation. The goal is to establish a positive and credible image that aligns with the organization's values and desired image. By consistently managing their reputation, organizations can build a positive reputation that resonates with stakeholders and supports their long-term goals.

## **2.3 Review of Opinion**

### **2.3.1 Public relations strategies of healthcare sectors for building trust and credibility with stakeholders**

Public relations strategies play a crucial role in building trust and credibility with stakeholders in the healthcare sector. By effectively communicating and engaging with various stakeholders, healthcare organizations can establish themselves as reliable and trustworthy sources of information and care. In this context, several strategies have been identified by Nigerian authors to enhance trust and credibility.

One strategy is the implementation of transparent and open communication practices. According to Adebayo, Oluwatosin, and Akintunde (2018), healthcare organizations should strive for clear and honest communication with stakeholders. This includes providing accurate and timely information about services, quality standards, and safety measures. By being transparent, healthcare organizations can foster trust among patients, employees, and the wider community. Transparency also involves actively addressing any concerns or issues raised by stakeholders, which further enhances credibility.

Another strategy is the use of patient-centered communication. Adeyemi, Oloruntoba, and Oluwaseyi (2018) highlight the importance of engaging patients in their own care and decision-making processes. Effective communication involves listening to patients, providing clear instructions, and addressing their concerns. When healthcare organizations adopt a patient-centered approach, they demonstrate their commitment to individualized care and empathy, thereby building trust and credibility with patients and their families.

Building strong relationships with the media is another important public relations strategy for healthcare organizations. Adepoju (2018) emphasizes the need for healthcare organizations to

establish positive relationships with journalists and media outlets. This involves providing accurate and reliable information, responding promptly to media inquiries, and collaborating on health-related stories. By working closely with the media, healthcare organizations can ensure accurate representation of their services and initiatives, which contributes to building trust and credibility with the public.

Engaging with and involving community stakeholders is a key strategy for trust and credibility building in the healthcare sector. According to Akintunde and Adebayo (2018), healthcare organizations should actively participate in community events, forums, and initiatives. This includes partnering with local organizations, sponsoring health-related programs, and conducting community outreach activities. By engaging with the community, healthcare organizations demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of the local population, fostering trust and credibility among community stakeholders.

Utilizing digital platforms and social media is another effective strategy for building trust and credibility in the healthcare sector. Adeyemi, Oloruntoba, and Oluwaseyi (2018) suggest that healthcare organizations should embrace digital communication channels to reach and engage with stakeholders. This includes maintaining informative and interactive websites, active social media accounts, and online forums for patient feedback and engagement. By leveraging digital platforms, healthcare organizations can provide valuable health information, address concerns, and foster a sense of transparency and accessibility, thereby enhancing trust and credibility.

Thought leadership and expertise is also another PR strategy. By positioning themselves as thought leaders in their respective fields, healthcare organizations can enhance their credibility. This involves actively participating in industry conferences, publishing research articles, and sharing insights and expertise through webinars or panel discussions. Establishing a reputation for

expertise helps build trust among stakeholders, including patients, healthcare professionals, and policymakers.

More so, sharing patient testimonials and success stories can be a powerful strategy for building trust in healthcare organizations. According to Ogunmuyiwa and Salihu (2018), positive patient experiences and outcomes serve as social proof and can influence the perceptions of other potential patients. Healthcare organizations can feature these stories on their websites, social media platforms, and marketing materials to demonstrate their commitment to quality care and patient satisfaction.

Additionally, collaboration with influencers and key opinion leaders is another strategy. Partnering with respected influencers and key opinion leaders in the healthcare industry can help healthcare organizations gain credibility and reach a wider audience. These influencers could be healthcare professionals, patient advocates, or prominent figures in the community. Collaborating with them on awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, or community events can enhance the organization's reputation and credibility.

In addition, accreditation and certification serves as another PR strategy. Obtaining relevant accreditations and certifications can contribute to building trust and credibility. Nigerian healthcare organizations can seek accreditation from reputable bodies such as the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), the Joint Commission International (JCI), or the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN). Displaying these accreditations prominently on their website and in their facilities helps assure patients and stakeholders of adherence to quality standards and best practices.

Conversely, healthcare organizations should proactively address any potential issues or controversies that may arise. This involves being prepared to address public concerns, promptly

addressing any negative feedback or complaints, and taking steps to rectify any shortcomings. By demonstrating a commitment to resolving issues and continuously improving, healthcare organizations can maintain trust and credibility with stakeholders.

More so, partnering with patient advocacy groups can be a valuable strategy for building trust and credibility. These organizations often have a strong influence on patient communities and can provide insights into patient needs, concerns, and expectations. Collaborating with them on initiatives related to patient education, support programs, or policy advocacy demonstrates a commitment to patient-centric care and builds trust among patients and their families.

### **2.3.2 Patient Satisfaction and its Influence on Image and Reputation**

Patient satisfaction plays a pivotal role in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations. According to Ojemeni and Ujumadu (2018), patient satisfaction serves as a crucial indicator of the quality of healthcare services provided by hospitals. Positive patient experiences and high satisfaction levels contribute to building a favorable image and reputation for hospitals, while negative experiences can have detrimental effects. This sentiment is echoed by Oyedele and Mbanisi (2018), who emphasize that hospitals with consistently high patient satisfaction ratings are perceived more positively by the public and enjoy a stronger reputation in the community.

Effectively managing patient satisfaction requires a strategic approach to public relations within healthcare organizations. Heath and Bowen (2017) assert that public relations professionals play a crucial role in understanding patient needs, enhancing communication, and implementing strategies to improve patient experiences. By actively listening to patient feedback, addressing their concerns, and implementing quality improvement initiatives, hospitals can enhance patient satisfaction levels. Public relations professionals also have a critical role in effectively

communicating the hospital's commitment to patient satisfaction to external stakeholders, such as the media and the community, thereby further bolstering the hospital's image and reputation.

Patient satisfaction becomes even more critical in crisis management situations. Hussain and Rawjee (2014) highlight the importance of public relations in crisis communication at tertiary institutions. During times of crisis, such as medical errors or outbreaks, hospitals need to effectively address patient concerns, provide transparent communication, and demonstrate genuine care for patients. By promptly and transparently addressing patient concerns during crises, hospitals can mitigate reputational damage and maintain trust with patients and the wider community. This, in turn, can positively impact patient satisfaction and contribute to the hospital's overall image and reputation.

In the Nigerian healthcare context, the significance of patient satisfaction and its impact on the image and reputation of healthcare organizations is also evident. Ibe and Eze (2011) conducted a study on public relations and crisis management in Nigeria, specifically focusing on the Niger Delta crisis. The study highlighted the need for healthcare organizations to prioritize patient satisfaction as a means to build trust and maintain a positive reputation, especially during times of crisis. Effective communication, responsiveness to patient needs, and the provision of quality care were identified as crucial factors in managing the crisis and preserving the image and reputation of the hospitals.

Patient satisfaction plays a critical role in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations. Positive patient experiences and high satisfaction levels contribute to building a favorable reputation for hospitals. According to Ojemeni and Ujumadu (2018), patient satisfaction serves as an important indicator of the quality of healthcare services provided by hospitals. Hospitals that consistently achieve high patient satisfaction ratings are perceived more positively

by the public and enjoy a stronger reputation in the community, as emphasized by Oyedele and Mbanisi (2018).

Managing patient satisfaction effectively requires a strategic approach to public relations within healthcare organizations. Heath and Bowen (2017) highlight the role of public relations professionals in understanding patient needs, enhancing communication, and implementing strategies to improve patient experiences. These professionals actively listen to patient feedback, address concerns, and implement quality improvement initiatives to enhance patient satisfaction levels. Additionally, public relations professionals play a critical role in effectively communicating the hospital's commitment to patient satisfaction to external stakeholders, such as the media and the community, further bolstering the hospital's image and reputation.

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### **2.3.3 Role of public relations in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations**

Public relations plays a crucial role in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations. By employing strategic communication and engagement efforts, public relations professionals can effectively manage and enhance the perception of healthcare organizations among their stakeholders. This section discusses the role of public relations in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations, drawing on insights from prominent authors in the field.

According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2013), public relations is "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." In the context of healthcare organizations, public relations professionals serve as advocates, communicators, and relationship-builders, working to establish and maintain positive perceptions among various stakeholders, including patients, employees, the media, government agencies, and the general public.

One key aspect of public relations in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations is strategic communication. In their study, Laskin and Jensen (2016) emphasize the importance of consistent and transparent messaging to convey the organization's values, services, and accomplishments. Public relations professionals develop key messages that align with the organization's mission and goals, ensuring that they are effectively communicated through various channels, such as press releases, websites, social media, and patient education materials.

Another critical role of public relations is stakeholder engagement. As noted by Heath and Palenchar (2014), engaging with stakeholders is vital for building trust, credibility, and positive relationships. Public relations professionals actively interact with patients, community members, and other stakeholders through initiatives such as community outreach programs, public events,

and patient feedback mechanisms. By listening to and addressing stakeholders' concerns, public relations practitioners help foster a positive perception of the healthcare organization and demonstrate a commitment to patient-centered care.

Crisis management is another area where public relations plays a significant role in safeguarding and repairing the image and reputation of healthcare organizations. In their research, Boin, 't Hart, and Stern (2016) highlight the importance of effective crisis communication in managing potential reputational risks. Public relations professionals are responsible for developing crisis communication plans, providing timely and accurate information during crises, and maintaining transparency and empathy in their communication efforts. By effectively managing crises, public relations practitioners can minimize reputational damage and restore stakeholders' trust in the organization.

Furthermore, public relations professionals contribute to the reputation management of healthcare organizations through media relations. In their study, Cornelissen (2017) emphasizes the impact of media coverage on the reputation of organizations. Public relations practitioners proactively engage with journalists, pitch positive stories, and respond to media inquiries, ensuring accurate and favorable coverage of the healthcare organization. By building strong relationships with the media, public relations professionals can influence the narrative surrounding the organization and shape its public image.

Public relations professionals in healthcare organizations also have a crucial role in managing internal communication. As highlighted by Hallahan (2017), effective internal communication is vital for fostering employee engagement, aligning organizational values, and ensuring consistent messaging. Public relations practitioners develop internal communication strategies that keep employees informed, engaged, and motivated. This includes channels such as

newsletters, intranets, town hall meetings, and employee recognition programs. By maintaining open lines of communication and fostering a positive internal culture, public relations professionals contribute to a positive organizational image, which in turn reflects on the external reputation.

Moreover, public relations professionals in healthcare organizations often collaborate with key opinion leaders (KOLs) and influencers in the industry. According to Chun and Davies (2015), KOLs have a significant impact on shaping opinions and influencing the reputation of healthcare organizations. Public relations practitioners identify and engage with influential individuals, such as medical experts or patient advocates, who can endorse the organization's services, provide testimonials, or participate in events and campaigns. By leveraging the credibility and reach of KOLs, public relations professionals enhance the organization's reputation and establish it as a trusted authority in the healthcare sector.

Additionally, public relations plays a role in managing social media and online presence. The digital landscape has become a critical platform for healthcare organizations to engage with stakeholders and shape their image. In their study, Waters and Williams (2018) emphasize the importance of social media in reputation management. Public relations professionals develop social media strategies, monitor online conversations, respond to inquiries and comments, and share relevant content to build an engaged online community. By effectively managing social media platforms and online presence, public relations practitioners can positively influence the organization's reputation and perception among the digital audience.

#### **2.3.4 Impact of effective communication strategies on the image and reputation of health sectors**

Effective communication strategies have a significant impact on the image and reputation of health sectors. By employing clear, consistent, and targeted communication, health

organizations can enhance stakeholder perceptions and establish themselves as trusted and reliable sources of information and care.

According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2013), effective communication is essential for establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. In the context of health sectors, effective communication strategies play a critical role in shaping the image and reputation of healthcare organizations and institutions.

Firstly, effective communication strategies help healthcare organizations build trust and credibility. As noted by Laskin and Jensen (2016), clear and transparent communication fosters trust among patients, employees, and the broader community. When healthcare organizations communicate openly and honestly about their services, quality standards, and safety measures, stakeholders develop confidence in the organization's capabilities and intentions.

Secondly, effective communication strategies contribute to the perception of quality and expertise. Cornelissen (2017) highlights the impact of communication on shaping stakeholders' beliefs about an organization's competence and knowledge. By effectively communicating evidence-based practices, medical advancements, and success stories, healthcare organizations can position themselves as leaders in their respective fields. This enhances their reputation as trusted sources of healthcare information and services.

Moreover, effective communication strategies facilitate patient engagement and satisfaction. Heath and Palenchar (2014) emphasize the importance of engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process. Through effective communication, healthcare organizations can involve patients in their own care, provide clear instructions, and address their concerns. This patient-centered approach improves satisfaction levels, enhances patient experiences, and contributes to positive word-of-mouth and reputation building.

Furthermore, effective communication plays a crucial role in managing crises and mitigating reputational risks. Boin, 't Hart, and Stern (2016) highlight the significance of timely and accurate communication during crises. Healthcare organizations that communicate openly, provide updates, and show empathy in challenging times can maintain stakeholder trust and minimize reputational damage. Effective crisis communication strategies demonstrate an organization's commitment to transparency, accountability, and patient safety, which positively impacts its image and reputation.

Effective communication strategies in health sectors also contribute to improved patient outcomes. According to Chun and Davies (2015), clear and accurate communication between healthcare providers and patients is essential for enhancing patient understanding, compliance with treatment plans, and overall health outcomes. When healthcare organizations employ effective communication strategies, such as using plain language, visual aids, and culturally sensitive approaches, they empower patients to make informed decisions about their health and treatment. This not only improves patient satisfaction but also enhances the organization's reputation as a provider of high-quality care.

In addition, effective communication strategies in health sectors can positively influence public perception and support for health initiatives. Waters and Williams (2018) emphasize the role of communication in shaping public opinion and fostering behavior change. By utilizing targeted communication campaigns, health organizations can raise awareness about important health issues, promote preventive measures, and encourage healthy behaviors. When communication strategies effectively engage and educate the public, they contribute to a positive perception of the organization's commitment to public health and well-being.

Furthermore, effective communication strategies help healthcare organizations navigate complex healthcare policies and regulations. Hallahan (2017) highlights the importance of strategic communication in managing public policy challenges. When healthcare organizations effectively communicate their compliance with regulations, adherence to ethical standards, and commitment to patient privacy and data security, they build trust and confidence among stakeholders. This transparent communication helps protect the organization's reputation and allows it to navigate potential reputational risks associated with regulatory compliance.

Moreover, effective communication strategies can foster collaboration and partnerships within the healthcare ecosystem. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2013) note that public relations involves building mutually beneficial relationships. By engaging in strategic communication with other healthcare organizations, government agencies, advocacy groups, and community stakeholders, healthcare organizations can establish themselves as collaborative and trusted partners. This enhances the organization's reputation as a valuable contributor to the overall health and well-being of the community.

## **2.4 Empirical Review**

Public relations plays a crucial role in managing the image and reputation of hospitals and healthcare institutions. Effective public relations strategies can help build trust, enhance credibility, and establish a positive perception among patients, stakeholders, and the community. While there may not be specific studies on Holy Cross private hospital, several studies have explored the impact of public relations on the image and reputation of healthcare organizations in general.

In a study by Adebowale and Okonkwo (2021), the researchers examined the influence of public relations strategies on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Lagos, Nigeria. The

study aimed to understand how the hospital's communication efforts, including media relations, community engagement, and crisis management, affected the perception of patients and the public. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and interviews with patients and stakeholders. The findings revealed that hospitals with well-developed public relations strategies and effective communication practices experienced higher levels of positive image and reputation. Patients and the public perceived the hospital as trustworthy, reliable, and committed to providing quality healthcare services.

Okafor and Ibrahim (2022) conducted a study on the impact of social media engagement on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Abuja, Nigeria. The research objective was to explore how the hospital's social media presence and interactions influenced the perception of patients and the community. A quantitative research design was employed, gathering data through online surveys administered to patients and social media followers. The findings indicated that an active and engaging social media presence played a significant role in enhancing the hospital's image and reputation. Patients and community members who engaged with the hospital's social media platforms perceived it as modern, accessible, and customer-focused.

In a study by Mohammed et al. (2023), the researchers investigated the effects of community engagement programs on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Enugu, Nigeria. The study aimed to understand how the hospital's involvement in community initiatives and partnerships influenced the perception of the hospital among the local population. The researchers employed qualitative research methods, conducting focus group discussions and interviews with community members. The findings highlighted that community engagement programs, such as health screenings, health education campaigns, and partnerships with local

organizations, positively affected the hospital's image and reputation. The hospital was perceived as socially responsible, caring, and invested in the well-being of the community.

Okoro and Eze (2021) conducted a study on the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies in protecting the image and reputation of a private hospital in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The research objective was to explore how the hospital's response to crises and negative incidents influenced the perception of patients and the community. The study utilized a case study approach, analyzing previous crisis situations and the hospital's communication strategies during those events. The findings highlighted the importance of timely and transparent communication, empathy, and accountability in mitigating the negative impact of crises on the hospital's image and reputation. Patients and community members perceived the hospital more positively when they perceived a swift and effective crisis response.

Adeleke and Onuoha (2022) examined the impact of employee communication on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study aimed to understand how internal communication practices, such as staff newsletters, meetings, and training programs, influenced the perception of employees and their subsequent portrayal of the hospital to patients and the community. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, combining surveys and interviews with hospital employees. The findings revealed that effective internal communication positively influenced employee satisfaction, engagement, and their ability to deliver quality patient care. Satisfied employees were more likely to project a positive image of the hospital, leading to enhanced reputation among patients and the community.

One study conducted by Johnson. (2019) examined the effect of public relations initiatives on the image and reputation of a healthcare institution. The study aimed to investigate how strategic communication efforts, including media relations, community engagement, and crisis

management, influenced the perception of the hospital among patients and the community. The crisis communication theory was used. The researchers utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The findings revealed that hospitals with well-developed public relations strategies and strong communication practices experienced higher levels of positive image and reputation.

In another study, Smith and Adekunle (2018) explored the impact of public relations campaigns on the reputation of healthcare organizations. The researchers assessed the effectiveness of various communication channels, such as social media, press releases, and community events, in shaping public perception. The study employed a quantitative research design and collected data through surveys administered to community members and patients. The results indicated that proactive and transparent public relations efforts positively influenced the reputation of healthcare organizations, leading to increased patient satisfaction and community support.

Furthermore, a review article by Okafor and Ibrahim (2017) examined the importance of public relations in healthcare organizations and its impact on image and reputation. The review synthesized findings from various studies and highlighted the key elements of effective public relations strategies, such as stakeholder engagement, internal communications, and crisis management. The authors emphasized the need for healthcare organizations to invest in skilled public relations professionals and develop comprehensive communication plans to maintain a positive image and reputation.

#### **2.4.1 Gaps in Empirical Study**

The current study shares a common focus with the other studies mentioned in exploring the relationship between public relations and the image/reputation of healthcare organizations.

However, each study differs in terms of its specific research objective, methodology, and context. Adebowale and Okonkwo's study (2021) on a private hospital in Lagos examines the influence of public relations strategies, including media relations, community engagement, and crisis management, on the image and reputation. While the current study also investigates the impact of public relations, it focuses specifically on Holy Cross private hospital in Ibusa, Delta State. The geographical and organizational context is different, which may lead to variations in findings and outcomes.

Okafor and Ibrahim (2022) analyze the impact of social media engagement on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Abuja. While the current study recognizes the importance of public relations strategies, it does not explicitly focus on social media engagement. The methodologies also differ, with Okafor and Ibrahim employing a quantitative research design using online surveys, whereas the current study uses a survey as the data collection instrument and face to face mode of administration.

Mohammed et al. (2023) investigate the effects of community engagement programs on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Enugu. In contrast, the current study does not explicitly explore community engagement programs. Additionally, Mohammed et al. employ qualitative research methods, such as focus group discussions and interviews, to gather data, whereas the current study uses a survey as the primary data collection instrument.

Okoro and Eze's study (2021) focuses on the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies in protecting the image and reputation of a private hospital in Port Harcourt. While crisis management is an important aspect of public relations, the current study does not specifically examine crisis communication strategies. Okoro and Eze use a case study approach, analyzing

previous crisis situations, while the current study makes use of a survey as the data collection instrument.

Adeleke and Onuoha's study (2022) explores the impact of employee communication on the image and reputation of a private hospital in Ibadan. While internal communication is a crucial component of public relations, the current study does not explicitly focus on employee communication. Additionally, Adeleke and Onuoha employ a mixed-methods approach with surveys and interviews, whereas the current study used only survey.

The studies by Johnson (2019) and Smith and Adekunle (2018) examine the impact of public relations initiatives and campaigns on the image and reputation of healthcare organizations in general. While they provide valuable insights into the broader field of healthcare public relations, they do not focus on specific hospitals or locations. In contrast, the current study centers on Holy Cross private hospital in Ibusa, Delta State.

Overall, while the studies mentioned share a common focus on the relationship between public relations and the image/reputation of healthcare organizations, they differ in terms of research objectives, methodologies, and specific aspects of public relations that are investigated. The current study, focusing on Holy Cross private hospital, contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the impact of public relations on the image and reputation in a specific organizational and geographic context.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.5.1 Image Repair Theory**

Image Repair Theory, developed by William Benoit in the 1990s, aims to explain how organizations respond to and repair their damaged reputation following a public crisis or negative event (Grunig & Grunig, 2017). The theory proposes a set of strategies that organizations can employ to address and repair their image in the face of public scrutiny. Image Repair Theory was developed as an extension of rhetorical theory and crisis communication research. It draws on concepts from persuasion, argumentation, and public relations to provide a framework for understanding how organizations can respond effectively to reputational crises.

Image Repair Theory posits that organizations employ specific strategies, known as "image repair strategies," to address allegations, mitigate damage, and restore their reputation. According to Galtung (1996), Benoit identified five primary image repair strategies:

- a. Denial: Organizations deny any wrongdoing or responsibility for the crisis.
- b. Evading responsibility: Organizations shift blame to others, downplay their involvement, or claim ignorance.
- c. Justification: Organizations provide a rationale or justification for their actions, emphasizing the positive motives behind their behavior.
- d. Corrective action: Organizations offer solutions, remedies, or reforms to demonstrate their commitment to preventing similar crises in the future.
- e. Mortification: Organizations express remorse, apologize, and accept full responsibility for their actions.

Image Repair Theory has been widely applied in various contexts, including corporate crises, political scandals, and public controversies. Researchers and practitioners have utilized the

theory to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of image repair strategies employed by organizations in different industries and sectors. It provides a systematic framework for understanding how organizations can respond to negative events and regain public trust.

Despite its contributions to the field of crisis communication, Image Repair Theory has faced some criticisms. Critics argue that the theory oversimplifies the complexity of reputational crises and the responses of organizations. They highlight that the effectiveness of image repair strategies may vary depending on the specific context, stakeholders involved, and the severity of the crisis. Furthermore, critics contend that the theory does not consider the ethical dimensions of image repair strategies, as organizations may use manipulative tactics to repair their reputation without genuine accountability.

This theory can provide valuable insights into how the hospital manages its reputation during challenging situations. Firstly, the study can utilize Image Repair Theory to analyze the crisis communication strategies employed by Holy Cross private hospital. By closely examining the hospital's responses to negative events or crises, researchers can identify which image repair strategies the hospital utilizes. This may include denial, evading responsibility, justification, corrective action, or mortification. By understanding the specific strategies employed, the study can evaluate the hospital's approach to addressing reputational challenges.

Secondly, the effectiveness of the image repair strategies can be assessed. The study can examine stakeholders' perceptions and reactions to the hospital's response. By analyzing stakeholder feedback and attitudes, researchers can determine whether the chosen image repair strategies have been successful in repairing and restoring the hospital's image and reputation.

Furthermore, the study can take into account the perspectives of different stakeholders, such as patients, employees, community members, and regulatory bodies. Image Repair Theory

helps in understanding how these stakeholders interpret and evaluate the hospital's image repair efforts. By considering the varying perspectives, the study can gain insights into the effectiveness of the hospital's communication strategies and whether they align with stakeholder expectations.

Lastly, the study can also consider the ethical dimensions of the image repair strategies employed by Holy Cross private hospital. By assessing whether the hospital's responses demonstrate genuine accountability, transparency, and a commitment to rectifying any shortcomings, researchers can evaluate the ethical implications of the hospital's image repair efforts. This analysis helps in understanding the long-term impact of the hospital's actions on its reputation and stakeholder trust.

### **2.5.2 Stakeholder Theory**

Stakeholder Theory, originally developed by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, aims to understand and analyze the relationships between organizations and their stakeholders (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). It recognizes that organizations are influenced by and have an impact on a wide range of individuals and groups who have a vested interest in the organization's activities. Stakeholder Theory was introduced by R. Edward Freeman in his book "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach" in 1984. Freeman proposed a shift from the traditional shareholder-centric view of organizations to a broader perspective that takes into account the interests and expectations of various stakeholders.

According to Oyewole (2012), the theory posits the following key tenets:

**a. Stakeholder Identification:** Organizations should identify and understand the diverse stakeholders who have a stake or interest in the organization, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and shareholders.

**b. Stakeholder Salience:** Stakeholders differ in their power, legitimacy, and urgency in relation to the organization. Stakeholder salience refers to the degree to which stakeholders' concerns and interests warrant attention from the organization.

**c. Stakeholder Engagement:** Organizations should actively engage with stakeholders to understand their perspectives, needs, and expectations, and consider their interests in decision-making processes.

**d. Value Creation:** Organizations should aim to create value for various stakeholders, rather than solely focusing on maximizing shareholder value. Balancing the interests of different stakeholders is crucial for long-term organizational success.

Stakeholder Theory has been widely applied in various fields, including business management, corporate social responsibility, and organizational ethics. It provides a framework for understanding stakeholder relationships, engagement strategies, and the impact of stakeholder management on organizational outcomes. Researchers have used Stakeholder Theory to analyze and evaluate stakeholder dynamics in different industries and organizational contexts.

The theory has received both support and criticisms. Some criticisms, as noted by Oyewole (2012) include:

**a. Lack of Clear Boundaries:** Critics argue that Stakeholder Theory lacks clear boundaries in defining who should be considered as stakeholders. The broad scope of stakeholders can make it challenging for organizations to prioritize and address conflicting stakeholder interests.

**b. Difficulty in Measurement:** Critics contend that Stakeholder Theory lacks concrete measurement tools to assess the relative importance and influence of different stakeholders. This makes it challenging to implement and operationalize the theory effectively.

**c. Shareholder Primacy Debate:** Some argue that Stakeholder Theory challenges the traditional shareholder primacy view, which prioritizes the interests of shareholders above all other stakeholders. The theory's emphasis on balancing stakeholder interests has been a subject of debate among scholars and practitioners.

In the current study, the theory can be applied to provide insights into the relationships between the hospital and its various stakeholders. Stakeholder Theory helps in identifying and understanding the diverse stakeholders associated with Holy Cross private hospital. This includes patients, employees, doctors, local community members, regulatory bodies, and shareholders. By recognizing and mapping out these stakeholders, the study can gain a comprehensive understanding of the different groups that have an interest in the hospital's activities.

The theory also emphasizes stakeholder salience, which refers to the importance and relevance of stakeholders to the organization. The study can assess the power, legitimacy, and urgency of different stakeholders in relation to Holy Cross private hospital. This analysis helps in prioritizing stakeholder concerns and determining the extent to which the hospital should address their interests.

Stakeholder Theory encourages active engagement with stakeholders. In the context of the study, researchers can examine how Holy Cross private hospital engages with its stakeholders. This includes understanding the hospital's communication channels, feedback mechanisms, and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes. By evaluating stakeholder engagement practices, the study can assess the hospital's efforts to incorporate stakeholder perspectives and address their needs.

Furthermore, Stakeholder Theory highlights the importance of value creation for stakeholders. The study can examine how Holy Cross private hospital creates value for its

stakeholders beyond financial returns. This can involve analyzing the hospital's initiatives related to patient care, employee well-being, community outreach programs, and environmental sustainability. By assessing value creation efforts, the study can evaluate the hospital's overall impact on its stakeholders and their perceptions of the hospital's image and reputation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Preamble**

This chapter reviews the methods that will be adopted in carrying out the study. These include research design, population of the study, sample size, sampling technique, validity of the study, reliability of research instrument, method of data administration and collection and method of data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study is a quantitative study and the survey research design was used to collect and analyze data. The survey design is appropriate for educational fact-finding and yields a great deal of information, which is accurate. The study adopted a survey research design because it is used to find out what situations, events attitude or opinions are occurring in a population.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The total number of residents of Ibusa formed the population of this study. According to World Population Review (2022), Ibusa has a population of one hundred and sixty six thousand, three hundred and ten (166,310).

#### **3.3 Sample Size**

The sample size for this study was 100. Taro Yamanes (1967) sampling size determination technique was used to calculate the sample size for this study. The formular for the calculation is:

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

where n is the sample size

N refers to the population of the study

E refers to the sampling error (usually 0.10 acceptable error)

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{166,310}{(1 + (166,310(0.10)^2))}$$

$$n = \frac{166,310}{(1 + 1663.1)}$$

$$n = \frac{166,310}{1664.1}$$

$$n = 99.9$$

$$n = 100$$

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

In the current study, the researcher has chosen to utilize the random sampling technique. This sampling approach involves selecting individuals from the population of interest in a random and unbiased manner. In this case, the copies of the questionnaire was randomly distributed to residents of Ibusa, including patients of Holy Cross hospital.

The random sampling technique is an appropriate choice for this study as it helps ensure the representativeness of the sample and enhances the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of interest. By randomly selecting participants, every individual in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, which minimizes potential biases and increases the likelihood of obtaining a diverse and unbiased representation of the Ibusa community and patients at Holy Cross hospital.

Furthermore, random sampling helps to mitigate selection bias, as it reduces the chances of systematically excluding or including certain groups of individuals. By distributing the questionnaires randomly, the researcher can collect data from a variety of residents in Ibusa, including those from different demographic backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and healthcare experiences. This approach enhances the validity and reliability of the study's results, providing a

more accurate understanding of the impact of public relations on the image and reputation of Holy Cross private hospital in the broader Ibusa community.

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

The instrument that was used in gathering data for the study was the questionnaire. Because it is easy and quick to answer, response choice can clarify the question text for the respondent, improves consistency of responses, easy to compare with other respondents or questionnaire, easier, quick, and less costly to analyze. The questionnaire was made of two sections containing close-ended questions. Section A contained questions regarding the demographics of the respondents while section B contained questions that sought to find out answers needed to answer the research questions in the study as stated in chapter one.

### **3.6 Validity of Research Instrument**

Validity is the process of finding out the degree to which a research or test indeed measures what it purports to measure. In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire in this study, logical analysis of the content of the questionnaire was done to ensure it is in consonance with the research objectives. In addition, the questions in the questionnaire was reviewed under the guidance of the project supervisor.

### **3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument**

A test-re-test method of reliability was employed where two administrations of the questionnaire was carried out on the same respondents. The instrument was administered on twenty Ibusa residents after two weeks; the same questionnaire was administered to the same respondents and there was a correlation co-efficient of 0.8 which made the instrument reliable

### **3.8 Method of Data Collection**

The distribution and collection of questionnaire was face-to-face. This was to enable the researcher explain to respondents who did not understand how to fill it on ways to fill it as well as get a high return of the copies of questionnaire.

### **3.9 Method of Data Analysis**

A simple percentage mean was used in analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire. The method of analysis above was considered the most suitable because it can be used to explained the extents to which a factor influence the music preference of Benin City residents as well as the relationship that exist between such influence. The data were further classified, tabulated and summarized using simple percentage, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and frequency distribution.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the analysis and interpretation of the data collected during the course of this study. The discussion is organized in a structured manner, commencing with an examination of the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by an exploration of the psychographic data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a comprehensive discussion of the key findings that have emerged from the study.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution Table**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Number of Questionnaire Sampled	400	100
Number of Questionnaire Retrieved	369	92.3
Number of Questionnaire Lost/Invalid	31	7.7

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 1 provides an overview of the questionnaire distribution and retrieval process. The key figure to note is that 92.3% of the 400 distributed questionnaires were successfully retrieved, while 7.7% were lost or deemed invalid. This high retrieval rate suggests that the data collection process was well-organized and efficient, ensuring a strong foundation for the subsequent analysis.

## 4.2 Data Presentation

**Table 2: Age of Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	101	27.4
26-35	98	26.6
36-45	99	26.8
46 and above	71	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

The age distribution of the respondents indicates a relatively even spread across the different age groups, with a slight concentration in the 18-25 and 36-45 age ranges. This suggests a diverse sample of participants, representing different life stages and potential experiences.

**Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	164	44.4
Married	198	53.6
Divorced	7	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

The marital status of the respondents shows a predominance of married individuals, with a significant proportion of single respondents as well. This implies that both the views of married, unmarried and divorced individuals were sought after in the study.

**Table 3: Religion of Respondents**

<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	351	95.1
Islam	18	4.9
Others	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

The religious affiliation of the respondents is heavily skewed towards Christianity, with a small percentage identifying as Muslim. This religious composition reflects the broader demographics of the population being studied as Ibusa is predominantly made up of Christians.

**Table 4: Educational Qualification of Respondents**

<b>Educational Qualifications</b>		
O'level	22	5.9
OND	75	20.3
HND	73	19.7
B.Sc.	197	53.4
M.Sc.	2	0.5
Others	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

The educational qualifications of the respondents reveal a varied educational background, with a majority holding bachelor's degrees and a considerable proportion having diplomas or certificates. This educational diversity contributes to the richness of the data and the perspectives shared by the participants as each respondent contributes based on educational level, perception and experience.

**Table 5: Respondents know Holy Cross Private Hospital, Ibusa**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	240	65.0
No	0	0
Not Sure	18	4.9
Partially	111	30.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

Table 6 indicates that a significant majority (65%) of the respondents are familiar with the Holy Cross Private Hospital in Ibusa, while 30.1% are partially aware of the hospital. This suggests that the hospital has a strong presence and recognition within the local community.

**Table 7: How do you know Holy Cross Private Hospital?**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
As a patient	202	54.7
Patients' relation	129	34.9
Worker	38	10.2
I don't know them	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

Table 7 provides insights into how the respondents are familiar with the Holy Cross Private Hospital. The majority have had direct experience as patients, while 34.9% are familiar through their relations with patients. This indicates that the hospital has a strong patient-centered approach and a positive reputation within the community.

**Table 8: Which of the following public relations strategies do you believe Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa has implemented?**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Media relations (press releases, interviews, media coverage)	101	27.4
Community engagement and outreach programs	76	20.6
Social media management and online presence	85	23.0
Sponsorships and partnerships with local organizations	11	2.9
Crisis communication and reputation management	5	1.4
Patient testimonials and success stories	90	24.4
Events and conferences participation	1	0.3
Collaborations with healthcare professionals and experts	0	0
Others	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

Table 8 reveals the respondents' perceptions of the public relations strategies employed by the Holy Cross Private Hospital. The most frequently cited strategies are media relations, patient testimonials and success stories and social media management and online presence. This suggests that the hospital has prioritized a multi-faceted approaches to its public relations efforts, leveraging various channels to engage with its stakeholders.

**Table 9: The communication efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively convey the hospital's key messages**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	108	23.3
Agree	100	27.1
Neutral	60	16.3
Disagree	48	13.0
Strongly Disagree	53	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 9 explores the respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Holy Cross Private Hospital's communication efforts. The data show a relatively even distribution, with 50.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the communication efforts are effective, while 30.9% disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in the hospital's communication strategies to better align with the expectations and needs of its stakeholders.

**Table 10: Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa maintains transparency and openness in their public relations practices**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	123	33.3
Agree	115	31.2
Neutral	27	7.3
Disagree	55	14.9
Strongly Disagree	49	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 10 indicates that the majority of respondents (64.5%) believe that the Holy Cross Private Hospital maintains transparency and openness in its public relations practices. This means that the hospital has been relatively successful in cultivating a sense of trust and openness with its stakeholders through its public relations efforts.

**Table 11: Respondents are aware of the strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital, Ibusa**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	208	56.4
No	70	18.9
Not Sure	0	0
Partially	91	24.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2024.**

Data from table 11 show that the majority of respondents are aware of the strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital in Ibusa. This suggests that the hospital has been relatively successful in communicating its public relations efforts and initiatives to the local community. The high level of awareness among respondents indicates that the hospital's outreach and communication channels are effective in reaching and informing its key stakeholders. This is an important foundation for building trust, credibility, and a positive reputation within the community.

**Table 12: The public relations strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa align with the hospital's mission and values**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	142	38.5
Agree	118	31.9
Neutral	16	4.3
Disagree	40	10.8
Strongly Disagree	53	14.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 9 indicates that most respondents (70.4%) either strongly agree or agree that the public relations strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital align with the hospital's

mission and values. This alignment is crucial, as it suggests that the hospital's public relations efforts are coherent, authentic, and reflective of its core identity and principles.

**Table 13: Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively utilizes various communication channels to engage with its stakeholders**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	59	15.9
Agree	85	23.0
Neutral	20	5.4
Disagree	95	25.7
Strongly Disagree	110	29.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 13 presents a more mixed picture regarding the hospital's utilization of various communication channels to engage with its stakeholders. While many of the respondents either strongly agree or agree that the hospital effectively uses different communication channels, a significant portion (55.5%) either disagree or strongly disagree with this assessment. This suggests that the hospital may need to review and potentially expand its approach to stakeholder engagement, ensuring that it is utilizing a diverse range of communication methods to reach and connect with its various audience segments.

**Table 14: The public relations efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa positively shape respondents' perception of the hospital**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	147	39.8
Agree	222	61.2
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 14 data overwhelmingly positive, with 91% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that the hospital's public relations efforts have positively shaped their perception of the institution. This indicates that the hospital's public relations strategies have been highly effective in enhancing its image and reputation among the local community.

**Table 15: Respondents believe that the public relations activities of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa contribute to building trust and credibility with the community**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	151	40.9
Agree	115	31.2
Neutral	16	4.3
Disagree	47	12.7
Strongly Disagree	40	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 15 shows that the majority of respondents (72.1%) either strongly agree or agree that the hospital's public relations activities have contributed to building trust and credibility within the community. This is a crucial aspect of effective public relations, as trust and credibility are foundational to an organization's long-term relationships with its stakeholders.

**Table 16: The public relations initiatives undertaken by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively convey the hospital's commitment to providing quality healthcare services**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	77	20.9
Agree	100	27.1
Neutral	24	6.5
Disagree	80	21.7
Strongly Disagree	88	23.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 16 presents a more mixed picture regarding the hospital's public relations initiatives and their ability to effectively convey the institution's commitment to providing quality healthcare services. While 48% of respondents either strongly agree or agree with this assessment, a significant portion (45.5%) either disagree or strongly disagree. This means that the hospital may need to re-evaluate its approach to communicating its quality-focused mission and values through its public relations channels.

**Table 17: Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa's public relations efforts enhance its reputation as a reliable and reputable healthcare provider in Ibusa**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	90	24.4
Agree	112	30.4
Neutral	20	5.4
Disagree	77	20.9
Strongly Disagree	70	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 17 indicates that most respondents either strongly agree or agree that the hospital's public relations efforts have enhanced its reputation as a reliable and reputable healthcare provider in Ibusa. However, a notable percentage (39.8%) either disagree or strongly disagree with this

assessment. This reflects a more mixed perception of the hospital's reputation, suggesting that while the public relations strategies have been somewhat successful in improving the hospital's profile, there is still room for further enhancement and refinement of these efforts.

**Table 18: The public relations strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa positively contribute to the hospital's image and reputation**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	125	33.8
Agree	166	44.9
Neutral	5	1.4
Disagree	38	10.3
Strongly Disagree	38	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 18 shows that the majority of respondents (78.7%) either strongly agree or agree that the hospital's public relations strategies have positively contributed to its image and reputation. This is a very positive finding, as it indicates that the hospital's public relations efforts have been effective in shaping a favorable overall perception of the institution.

**Table 19: Respondents believe that the public relations efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa differentiate it from other healthcare providers in terms of its image and reputation**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	90	24.4
Agree	71	19.2
Neutral	27	7.3
Disagree	87	23.6
Strongly Disagree	94	25.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 19 presents a more mixed picture regarding whether the hospital's public relations efforts differentiate it from other healthcare providers in terms of image and reputation. While 43.6% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that the hospital's public relations strategies set it apart, a significant portion either disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests that the hospital may need to further refine and strengthen its public relations approach to better distinguish itself from competitors and establish a unique, compelling brand identity within the local healthcare landscape.

**Table 20: The public relations activities of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively address negative perceptions or misconceptions about the hospital**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	87	23.6
Agree	75	20.3
Neutral	10	2.7
Disagree	111	30.1
Strongly Disagree	86	23.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 20 shows that a large proportion of respondents do not believe the hospital's public relations activities are effective in addressing negative perceptions or misconceptions about the institution.

The relatively high percentage of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree suggests the hospital may need to devote more attention and resources to its reputation management efforts in order to enhance stakeholder trust and confidence.

**Table 21: Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa's public relations strategies positively influence respondents' decision to seek healthcare services from the hospital**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	75	20.3
Agree	84	22.7
Neutral	13	3.5
Disagree	102	27.6
Strongly Disagree	95	25.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024.**

Table 21 shows that respondents are again divided on whether the hospital's public relations strategies positively influence their decision to seek healthcare services from the institution. While 43% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that the public relations efforts influence their healthcare choices, a significant portion (53.3%) either disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests that the hospital's public relations strategies may not be fully succeeding in driving patient acquisition and loyalty.

### 4.3 Testing of Hypotheses

**HO<sub>1</sub>: Public relations practices have no significant influence on the perceptions of Ibusa residents**

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
75	73.8	1.2	1.44	0.0195
84	73.8	10.2	104.04	1.4086
13	73.8	-60.8	3698.64	50.0891
102	73.8	-28.2	794.44	10.7639
95	73.8	-35.8	448.44	6.0783
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>			<b>68.4</b>

*\*Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024.*

Calculated  $(X^2) = \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E} = 68.4$

E

According to the Chi-Square Score to P Value Calculator, the p-value associated with  $X^2 = 68.4$  and  $n-1 = 5-1 = 4$  degrees of freedom is 0.000.

#### Decision Rule

The level of significance set for this study is 0.05. The decision rule states that if the p-value (probability value) greater or is equal to the pre-set level of significance ( $p \geq 0.05$ ), then the null hypothesis will be accepted, however, if the p-value is less or equal to 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis will be rejected. It therefore means that public relations practices have a significant influence on the perceptions of Ibusa residents.



**H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant impact of public relations strategies on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa.**

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
125	73.8	51.2	2621.4	35.5
166	73.8	92.2	8500.8	115.2
5	73.8	-68.8	4733.4	64.1
38	73.8	-35.8	1281.6	17.3
38	73.8	-35.8	1281.6	17.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>369</b>			<b>213.9</b>

*\*Source: Researcher's Computation, 2024.*

Calculated  $(X^2) = \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E} = 213.9$

E

According to the Chi-Square Score to P Value Calculator, the p-value associated with  $X^2 = 213.9$  and  $n-1 = 5-1 = 4$  degrees of freedom is 0.000.

#### **Decision Rule**

The level of significance set for this study is 0.05. The decision rule states that if the p-value (probability value) greater or is equal to the pre-set level of significance ( $p \geq 0.05$ ), then the null hypothesis will be accepted, however, if the p-value is less or equal to 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis will be rejected. It therefore means that there is a significant impact of public relations strategies on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

One of the key strengths highlighted by the data is the hospital's ability to establish strong brand recognition and familiarity within the local community. This suggests that the hospital's public relations efforts have been successful in creating a memorable presence and positioning the institution as a prominent healthcare provider in the area. This is an important foundation, as high levels of awareness and familiarity can facilitate greater trust, credibility, and engagement with stakeholders.

The study showed that there is utilization of diverse communication channels for public relations, from media relations to patient testimonials, indicates a strategic and well-rounded approach to public relations. This diversification allows the hospital to reach a broader audience and cater to the varying information preferences and needs of different stakeholder groups. By employing multiple touchpoints, the hospital can foster more comprehensive and impactful communication, potentially leading to enhanced brand loyalty and positive sentiment.

Another noteworthy finding of the study is that the hospital has perceived transparency in its public relations strategies. In the healthcare industry, transparency is a critical factor in building trust and credibility with patients and the community. The fact that the majority of respondents believe the hospital maintains transparency speaks to the hospital's commitment to open and honest communication, which can be a differentiating factor in a competitive market.

However, the data also highlight areas where the hospital could potentially improve its public relations strategies. The mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the hospital's communication efforts and their influence on patient decision-making suggest that there may be opportunities to further refine and optimize the hospital's messaging, channels, and overall approach to public relations.

It is important to note that while the data provide valuable insights, the true impact and effectiveness of the hospital's public relations strategies may not be fully captured by the current findings. Factors such as long-term patient loyalty, referral rates, and the hospital's ability to attract and retain talent may offer additional perspectives on the real-world outcomes of the public relations initiatives.

The study by Chun and Davies (2015) underscores the importance of reputation management in the healthcare industry, which is clearly reflected in the Holy Cross Private Hospital data. The hospital's focus on building brand recognition, cultivating transparency, and leveraging diverse communication channels align with the key principles of effective reputation management outlined in this research.

More so, Cornelissen's (2017) work on corporate communication provides a theoretical framework for understanding the strategic role of public relations in organizations. The Holy Cross Private Hospital's multi-faceted approach to public relations, encompassing media relations, patient testimonials, and social media engagement, resonates with Cornelissen's emphasis on the need for a comprehensive and integrated communication strategy. Furthermore, the study by Davis and Clark (2018) highlight the value of storytelling and brand positioning in enhancing an organization's image-building efforts. The Holy Cross Private Hospital's use of patient testimonials and success stories likely contributes to its ability to create a positive and compelling brand narrative, which can be a powerful tool for reputation enhancement.

The study's findings unequivocally contradict the proposed hypotheses, underscoring the significant influence of public relations practices on stakeholders' perceptions and the hospital's image. Specifically, the data reveal that Holy Cross Private Hospital's public relations efforts have

yielded tangible benefits, including enhanced brand recognition, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. This contradicts the first null hypothesis, which posited that public relations practices have no significant influence on the perceptions of Ibusa residents.

Furthermore, the study's outcomes also refute the second null hypothesis, which suggested that public relations strategies have no significant impact on the image and reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa. On the contrary, the hospital's strategic deployment of diverse communication channels, patient testimonials, and social media engagement has contributed to its positive brand narrative and reputation management.

The Image Repair Theory (IRT) provides a useful framework for understanding the hospital's public relations strategies. Through acknowledging potential threats to its image, such as mixed perceptions of communication effectiveness, the hospital has proactively employed image repair techniques. These include fostering transparency, leveraging diverse communication channels, and showcasing patient success stories to maintain a positive image.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

This study was conducted to investigate the impact of the public relations (PR) strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa on the institution's image and reputation within the local community. Anchored on two theoretical frameworks - the Image Repair Theory and the Stakeholder Theory - the study adopted a survey research design to gather in-depth insights from the target population.

The researcher designed and administered a structured questionnaire to a representative sample of Ibusa residents, ensuring the data collected were reflective of the broader community's perceptions and attitudes towards the hospital. The survey instrument was carefully constructed to address the study's three core objectives: 1) assessed the current state of public relations strategies utilized by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, 2) examined the influence of these PR practices on the local community's views and impressions of the institution, and 3) evaluated the overall impact of the hospital's public relations efforts on its image building and reputation.

The findings reveal that:

1. Majority (65%) of respondents are familiar with Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa, with 54.7% having had direct experience as patients.
2. Most (78.7%) of respondents believe the hospital's public relations strategies have positively contributed to its image and reputation.
3. Many (43%) of the respondents agree that the hospital's public relations strategies influence their decision to seek healthcare services from the hospital.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study concluded that the public relations efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa have been largely successful in enhancing the hospital's image and reputation among the local community. The majority of respondents indicated that the hospital maintains transparency and openness in its public relations practices, effectively communicates its strategies, and aligns these strategies with its mission and values. Respondents also overwhelmingly agreed that the hospital's public relations initiatives have positively shaped their perception of the institution and contributed to building trust and credibility within the community. However, the data also highlighted areas for potential improvement, such as the hospital's utilization of diverse communication channels and its ability to effectively convey its commitment to quality healthcare services through public relations. Additionally, while most respondents believed the hospital's public relations efforts have enhanced its reputation, a significant portion held a more mixed view on the hospital's differentiation from other healthcare providers in the region. Overall, the study suggests that Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa has established a strong foundation in its public relations practices, but there is room for further refinement and enhancement to solidify its image and reputation within the local healthcare landscape.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

1. Holy Cross Private hospital should continue to prioritize transparency and openness within the local community and should also ensure its public relations efforts consistently reinforce its commitment to its stated mission and values.

2. While the hospital's public relations initiatives have been successful to some extent, the study highlighted the need to utilize a broader range of communication channels. As such, the hospital should explore additional platforms, such as social media, digital outreach, and community engagement programs, to further enhance its reach and engagement with the local community.

3. Given the significant impact of public relations strategies on the hospital's image and reputation, the hospital should regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its public relations efforts. This could involve gathering feedback from the community, analyzing key performance indicators, and making data-driven adjustments to ensure the hospital's strategies remain relevant and impactful.

4. One of the main problems highlighted in the work was the case of high death rate in the hospital and how it affected the credibility status of the hospital and overall quality of services . It is therefore recommended that the hospital should look into upgrading and improving their medical equipments so as to provide greater quality health services to their patients.

5 Holy cross Hospital Ibusa, should organize training programs where healthcare workers are trained professionally and occasionally for the purpose of enhancing the quality of their services as this makes them more trusting to the community they serve and promotes their overall image to the society.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for Further Studies**

The researcher recommends that other researchers should carry out studies on the following:

1. Comparative Analysis of PR Strategies and Community Impact Between Public and Private Hospitals in the Ibusa area.

This study should involve a comparative analysis of the public relations strategies and their impact on community perceptions between Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa and select public/government-run hospitals in the Ibusa area. The research should aim to identify key differences in PR approaches, community engagement initiatives, and the resulting influence on the reputation and trust of these healthcare institutions among Ibusa residents. The findings could provide valuable insights to help both private and public hospitals optimize their PR efforts to better serve the local community.

## 2. Longitudinal Evaluation of PR Strategy Effectiveness and Reputation Management at Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa:

This long-term study should track the evolution of Holy Cross Private Hospital's public relations strategies and their impact on the hospital's reputation over an extended period, such as 5-10 years. The research should utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, focus groups, and media analysis, to assess changes in community perceptions, brand positioning, and overall reputation of the hospital. The study should aim to identify the key factors and PR approaches that contribute to successful reputation management in the healthcare sector.

## 3. Stakeholder-Centric Approach to Developing Effective PR Strategies for Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa:

This project should focus on gathering comprehensive feedback from diverse stakeholders, including hospital management, medical staff, Ibusa residents, local government authorities, and other community members, to inform the development of more effective public relations strategies for Holy Cross Private Hospital. The research should employ interactive workshops, in-depth

interviews, and collaborative ideation sessions to better understand the needs, expectations, and concerns of these stakeholders. The insights gained should guide the hospital in crafting PR initiatives that address the holistic interests of the community it serves.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,  
Faculty of Arts,  
University of Benin,  
Edo-State.

Dear Respondent,

#### **REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING A RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a post-graduate student from the above-named department carrying out a research on **Impact of Public Relations on the Image and Reputation of Holy Cross Private Hospital, Ibusa, Delta State**. This is an academic research leading to the award of Master of Arts (M.A) degree in Mass Communication and your honest opinion is required. Your opinion is kindly requested. Your answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Thank you for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

MaryJane Elumelu

Researcher.

Please fill the questionnaire by ticking [] in the option most applicable to you.  
**Key:** SA - Strongly Agree; A -Agree; N; Neutral D – Disagree SA-Strongly Disagree

### SECTION A: Demographic data

1. What is your age? 18-25 [  ] 26-35 [  ] 36-45[  ] 46 and above [  ]
2. What is your marital status? Single [  ] Married [  ] Divorced [  ]
3. What religion do you profess? Christianity [  ] Islam [  ] Traditional Worshippers [  ] Others,  
Please specify.....
4. What is your educational qualification: O’level [  ] OND [  ] HND [  ] B.Sc [  ] M.Sc [  ]  
others, please specify.....

### SECTION A: Psychographic data

1. Do you know Holy Cross Private Hospital?  
(a) Yes [  ] (b) No [  ] (c) Not sure [  ] (d) Partially [  ]
2. How do you know Holy Cross Private Hospital?  
(a) As a patient [  ] (b) Patients’ relation [  ] (c) Worker [  ] (d) I don’t know them [  ]
3. Which of the following public relations strategies do you believe Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa has implemented? (Please select all that apply)
  - Media relations (press releases, interviews, media coverage)
  - Community engagement and outreach programs
  - Social media management and online presence
  - Sponsorships and partnerships with local organizations
  - Crisis communication and reputation management
  - Patient testimonials and success stories
  - Events and conferences participation
  - Collaborations with healthcare professionals and experts
  - Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
4. The communication efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively convey the hospital's key messages.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
5. Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa maintains transparency and openness in their public relations practices.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6a. Are you aware of the strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital, Ibusa?

(a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ] (c) Not sure [ ] (d) Partially [ ]

If your answer is yes then proceed to answer 6b.

6b. The public relations strategies implemented by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa align with the hospital's mission and values.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively utilizes various communication channels to engage with its stakeholders.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. The public relations efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa positively shape my perception of the hospital.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. I believe that the public relations activities of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa contribute to building trust and credibility with the community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. The public relations initiatives undertaken by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively convey the hospital's commitment to providing quality healthcare services.

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa's public relations efforts enhance its reputation as a reliable and reputable healthcare provider in Ibusa.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. The public relations strategies employed by Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa positively contribute to the hospital's image and reputation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13. I believe that the public relations efforts of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa differentiate it from other healthcare providers in terms of its image and reputation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. The public relations activities of Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa effectively address any negative perceptions or misconceptions about the hospital.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

15. Holy Cross Private Hospital Ibusa's public relations strategies positively influence my decision to seek healthcare services from the hospital.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree