

# Assessing the Awareness, Adoption, and Strategic Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Practice: Insights from Public Relations & Communication Professionals

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## Abstract

This study explores the integration and impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of public relations (PR). Using a quantitative survey approach, data was gathered from professionals across corporate, governmental, consultancy, and non-profit sectors. The aim of the study was to assess awareness, adoption, perceived impact, prospects, and the challenges associated with AI in public relations practices. A structured questionnaire was distributed, which included demographic items, five core AI-related questions, and a series of Likert-scale items assessing the effect of AI on PR. Respondents represented various domains of public relations, with a dominant focus on general communication (85%) and media relations (68%). The results of the study revealed that AI technologies were widely used among PR professionals, with 87% using smartphone assistants and 58% using smart devices. In addition, no significant gender-based differences were found in adoption patterns. Regarding perceptions of AI, professionals predominantly understood AI as involving automated decision-making and data-based learning. AI was also expected to significantly reshape the public relations landscape, alter operational processes, and influence individual roles. Mean scores (ranging from 3.54 to 3.74) reflected moderate to high expectations of AI's impact on public relations. Additionally, AI was not viewed as a threat to job security or professional identity. Mean scores for risk-related items were all significantly below the test value of 4, indicating confidence in human relevance and adaptability.

Unlike earlier international studies, Nigerian professionals perceived fewer barriers and risks in adopting AI. This suggests either early-stage optimism or limited engagement with the full implications of AI technologies. Importantly, the study emphasizes that the routine use of AI tools does not amount to professional competence in their strategic application. Based on the findings, the study recommends the need for professional development through formal training programs, curriculum reforms in public relations education to include AI literacy, and strategic leadership from industry bodies like the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) to guide awareness and responsible adoption.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence; Public Relations; Communication Professionals; AI Awareness; Professional Competence.

## Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into public relations (PR) marks a significant milestone in the evolution of communication. PR has continuously adapted to societal and technological shifts, with its primary aim being to manage the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders (Lock, 2023). In today's digital and cultural landscape, AI is rapidly becoming a transformative tool that is reshaping how public relations functions are carried out. In the contemporary, digitally driven world, public relations is undergoing a

transformation, with artificial intelligence (AI) playing a pivotal role (Pinto et al., 2024). Advancements in machine learning, data analytics, and natural language processing have empowered organizations to gather vast amounts of data, detect trends, gauge public sentiment, and customize communication strategies (Madupati, 2022).

In modern society, AI's role in public relations has become increasingly dependent on digital technologies and the Internet, as social media has become a dominant communication platform (Çerçi, 2024). AI supports not only data analysis but also online reputation management, enabling organizations to engage with audiences more effectively and automate responses to user needs on social platforms (Manoharan, 2024). The evolution of AI in public relations is strongly shaped by technological advancements, as increases in computing power, improvements in network infrastructure, and greater access to large datasets have all contributed to the rise of sophisticated AI systems (Buhmann et al., 2022). These innovations enable organizations to harness tools for data analysis, automate routine tasks, and enhance interactions with customers. AI technologies such as intelligent chatbots are already capable of engaging users in meaningful dialogue and delivering real-time information. Most PR practitioners hold favorable views about the role of AI in supporting their work (Martinez et al., 2024).

In today's interconnected world, effective communication is essential to organizational success, and public relations focuses on building positive brand perception, managing reputations, and communicating effectively with diverse audiences (Anani, 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) has increasingly become integral to various aspects of modern life, including the field of public relations (Septiana, 2025). AI introduces innovative tools and opportunities that are reshaping how PR campaigns are executed, how data is interpreted, how communication is tailored, and how reputations are maintained.

The integration of AI in public relations (PR) was first formally examined in the 2018 CIPR (Chartered Institute of Public Relations) report titled "Humans Still Needed", which evaluated the anticipated impact of AI on the industry over a five-year span. Due to AI's rapid advancement, additional research and insights have since been published. Notably, the State of AI in PR survey reveals that 64% of PR professionals have already used generative AI tools. These professionals commonly report enhanced work quality and faster project completion. Specifically, 74% believe AI has improved their output, while 89% say it helps them complete tasks more efficiently (Muck Rack, 2024).

The broad implementation of artificial intelligence by PR professionals is further supported by findings from The State of PR Technology report, which reveals that 67.8% of respondents actively use AI tools. Among first-time users, 61.4% report improvements in overall efficiency and productivity. Additionally, 76.6% of PR professionals leverage PR intelligence tools to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks thereby allowing more time for strategic initiatives. AI also assists with research and content creation, as 58.7% use it to accelerate social media and platform research, while 42.2% use AI-driven communication tools to streamline or automate content generation (Barryman, 2024).

A global survey by Sandpiper and PROvoke Media shows that 86% of communications professionals view AI as an opportunity and not a threat, despite concerns about automation and job displacement. With AI technology advancing rapidly, 65% anticipate significant changes in the global public relations industry within the next three years (Davies, 2024). The report *AI in Communications Industry Opportunities and Risks* echoes this optimism, noting that 86% of respondents hold a positive view of generative AI. Only 29% express concern about their roles being diminished or replaced due to AI. With generational differences emerging, only 21% of respondents over 45 worry about job impact compared to 40% of those under 35 (Sandpiper and PROvoke, 2024).

The Dfusion Communication agency's 2023 survey titled *Is AI Dreaming of Public Relations?* found that 69% of PR executives in public and private institutions view AI adoption positively, and nearly 30% have already integrated AI tools into their workflows. Another 41% plan to do so soon. Over half (53%) are eager to implement AI immediately, while 48% prefer to wait for regulatory guidelines. Most respondents (93%) see AI as a supportive tool, with 75% expecting it to aid in copywriting, 48% in generating creative ideas, and 35% in crafting

media messaging. An overwhelming 98% believe PR professionals should develop AI-related skills, and 67% support allocating additional budgets for AI integration and training (Malczewski et al., 2023).

## AI MODELS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) models in public relations (PR) have become pivotal in transforming the way communication professionals operate (Buhmann et al., 2022). These models, particularly those based on natural language processing (NLP), machine learning, and predictive analytics are being increasingly adopted to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and impact in public relations campaigns. By automating routine tasks and offering data-driven insights, AI is reshaping how messages are crafted, audiences are understood, and reputations are managed (Alaawad, 2021).

One of the most influential AI models in PR is natural language processing (NLP), which allows machines to interpret and respond to human language. NLP is particularly valuable for media monitoring and sentiment analysis (Jim et al., 2024). For instance, AI tools can analyze thousands of social media posts, news articles, and blogs in real time to determine whether public sentiment toward a brand is positive, negative, or neutral. This capability is crucial for crisis management, as it enables PR professionals to identify emerging issues and respond before they escalate (Claeys et al., 2023). Models like BERT and GPT-4, which are built on deep learning principles, are often used in this domain to extract contextually rich information from large volumes of text.

Another key application of AI models is in automated content creation, powered by generative AI systems that can draft press releases, blog entries, and social media posts, thereby saving significant time and ensuring consistency in tone and messaging (Kumar et al., 2024). According to the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), such tools are increasingly being used to produce tailored communication materials for different target groups. These AI-driven systems learn from previous campaigns and audience interactions, enabling them to produce personalized content that aligns with organizational goals and audience expectations (Haleem et al., 2022).

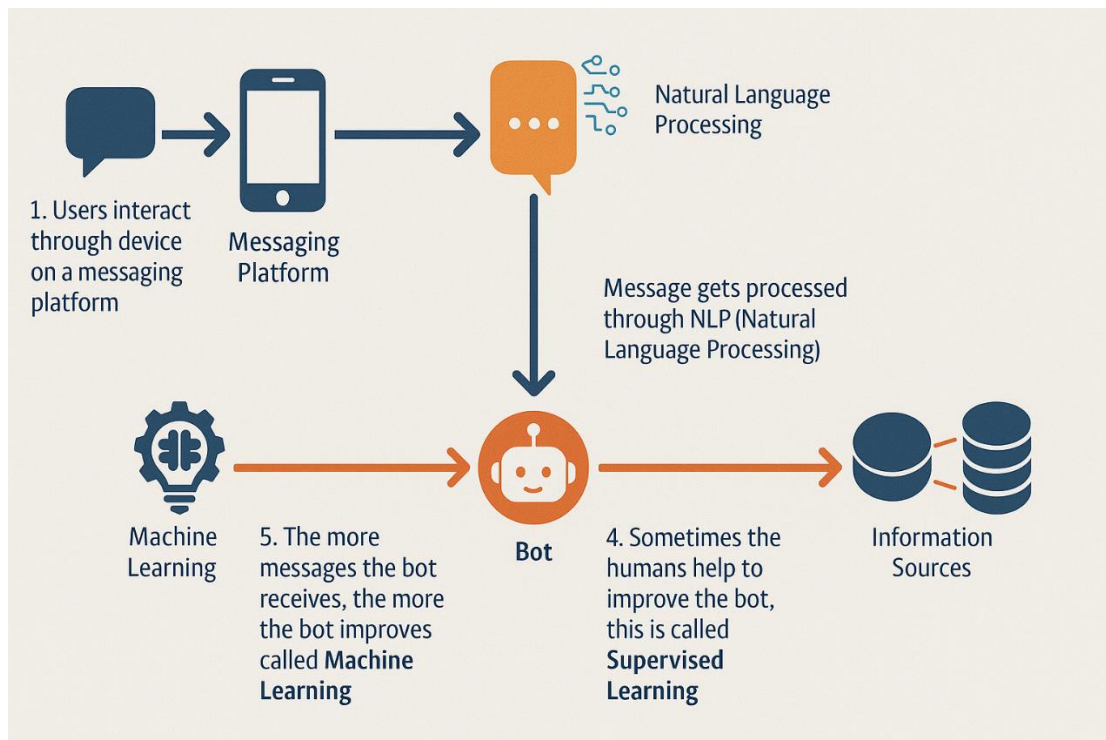
Predictive analytics, which is another dimension of AI modeling, enables PR professionals to forecast outcomes based on historical data (Madupati, 2022). This helps with campaign planning, audience behavior prediction, and message timing. For example, AI can analyze previous campaign data to predict when a press release will have the most impact or what type of content is most likely to go viral. Such forecasting models enhance strategic decision making, as shown in surveys where over 65% of PR professionals reported increased productivity and effectiveness through AI integration (Muck Rack, 2024).

Recommendation engines powered by AI also support media relations by identifying which journalists, influencers, or media outlets are most likely to be interested in a particular story. These systems analyze data such as previous publications, journalist interests, and audience demographics to provide precise targeting recommendations. This improves pitch success rates and fosters more meaningful media relationships (Mardhika, 2023). Furthermore, AI chatbots and virtual assistants have been adopted widely in PR to manage real-time communication with audiences. These bots can handle FAQs, provide updates during events or crises, and even respond to media inquiries, ensuring a constant brand presence and quick response time. Sandpiper and PROvoke Media (2024) report that 86% of communication professionals globally view AI not as a threat but as an opportunity to enhance their work, with a growing number relying on AI for frontline communication tasks.

Visual recognition models are also becoming more relevant in PR. These models scan and analyze image and video content to monitor brand placement, detect unauthorized logo use, and ensure that visual media aligns with brand guidelines. This functionality helps maintain a consistent brand image across multiple platforms (Dzik, 2023).

AI models in public relations serve as powerful tools that support, enhance, and streamline many aspects of the profession, from analyzing public sentiment and creating content to predicting outcomes and managing media relations. AI allows PR professionals to focus on strategic thinking and relationship building. However, as noted in the AI in Communications Industry Opportunities and Risks report, the human element, ethical judgment,

creativity, and emotional intelligence remain irreplaceable, ensuring that AI serves as a partner rather than a substitute in the evolving PR landscape (Sandpiper and PROvoke, 2024).



**Figure 1: AI Models in Public Relations & How AI (I.E. Chabot) Works with Humans**

### Advantages of Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Public Relations

The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping and revolutionizing numerous professional fields, including public relations (PR). While AI as a concept is not new, its application in PR is relatively recent and continues to evolve. The current trajectory indicates that AI holds considerable promise for enhancing PR practices (Kalogiannidis et al., 2024). However, alongside its advantages, there are emerging concerns about the potential risks and challenges it might bring. Notably, academic research on the influence of AI in the public relations domain remains limited, raising the need for deeper exploration.

When assessing the role of AI in public relations, it is evident that its impact spans several critical areas such as customer relationship management (CRM), media monitoring and analytics, chatbot and virtual assistant services, predictive trend analysis, sentiment analysis, internal communications, and crisis response strategies. Each of these areas benefit from AI's capabilities, although they also present unique challenges that warrant careful consideration (Toteva, 2023).

Customer relationship management is a core function within public relations, aimed at building and maintaining meaningful and lasting interactions with customers. CRM involves the strategic collection and analysis of customer data to deliver personalized experiences and improve service quality. As Pinto et al (2024) emphasized that effective CRM is driven by the intelligent use of technology and data to enhance client engagement. Artificial intelligence tools have significantly enhanced CRM by enabling businesses to provide customized marketing efforts, innovate their offerings, and gain a competitive edge through data driven decision making (Ajirotutu et al., 2024).

The digital revolution has exponentially increased the volume, speed, and variety of data available to organizations, prompting the development of AI-driven solutions (Joshi, 2025). Given that efficient CRM depends on the synergy between marketing strategies, technological advancements, accessible data, and organizational

frameworks (Türksoy, 2022), the integration of AI into CRM represents a powerful asset for public relations professionals seeking to optimize engagement and outcomes.

In this regard, organizations can leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to gain a deeper understanding of their target audience and enhance the effectiveness of customer relationship management (CRM). By utilizing AI-driven tools, companies can perform advanced data analytics, allowing them to build stronger, more personalized connections with customers, anticipate future trends, and secure a competitive edge in the marketplace (Phillips, 2024; Volarić et al., 2024; Alaawad, 2021). The application of AI in CRM heavily depends on big data comprised of digital footprints left by users during their online activities. These activities include interactions with news content, product browsing, purchase history, media consumption such as music and videos, and various other forms of online engagement. This extensive data is typically collected via tracking technologies like cookies (Madupati, 2022), forming the backbone of big data systems. While the sheer volume and complexity of this data render it difficult for human analysts to process manually, AI tools can efficiently extract meaningful insights from it. As a result, businesses that harness big data through AI gain a substantial advantage in managing customer relationships by converting critical customer indicators such as preferences, aspirations, goals, and needs into actionable intelligence (Hossain et al., 2022).

A key benefit of implementing AI in the analysis of big data for CRM is the potential to significantly reduce both costs and time. Since AI systems can process large data sets rapidly and with minimal resource expenditure, organizations are able to make faster and more informed decisions while conserving financial and human capital (Enholm et al., 2022). Moreover, the growing adoption of cloud computing technologies within today's digital ecosystem has significantly enhanced the capacity to store, manage, and reuse valuable data efficiently (Palos-Sánchez et al., 2022). This synergy between cloud infrastructure and artificial intelligence (AI) has made AI integration in customer relationship management (CRM) a cornerstone of public relations, not just beneficial, but indispensable. It enables organizations to analyze vast and complex datasets, bring consistency to data interpretation, and tailor communication strategies to individual customer needs (Chatterjee et al., 2020).

In addition to CRM, artificial intelligence is also pivotal in media monitoring, a critical function of public relations. Through AI-powered platforms, organizations can track and interpret media coverage and online conversations in real time, gaining a clearer understanding of both prospective and current audiences. Similar to CRM processes, these insights allow companies to design more precise and engaging content for social media platforms. AI tools further enhance public relations by informing the development of robust social media strategies, thanks to their ability to process and analyze vast streams of customer data (Lee et al., 2020).

Unlike traditional media, social media demands real-time responsiveness and constant engagement, placing an increased burden on public relations professionals. AI assisted monitoring tools address this challenge by enabling continuous interaction with audiences while simultaneously collecting actionable insights. These tools are equipped with intelligent algorithms that help determine the optimal timing, tone, and type of response for different customer interactions. However, it is important to acknowledge that current AI systems function within predefined algorithmic boundaries and cannot yet operate with full autonomy (Merhi, 2023). As AI technology continues to evolve, it is anticipated that future systems will possess greater adaptive capabilities, allowing them to evaluate user sentiment and respond in real time with even greater accuracy. Artificial intelligence enhanced tools for social media monitoring now allow for the rapid categorization of posts, comments, and user reactions, while also streamlining the management of responses through automation. In the era before AI, often referred to as the traditional period, these tasks were performed manually by public relations personnel, making the current transition to AI-driven processes both time-saving and cost efficient (Horodyski, 2023).

While the advent of social media and smartphone technologies has brought about a wealth of opportunities for engagement, it has also introduced complexities in handling and utilizing large volumes of data. Today, public relations practitioners can leverage advanced AI systems, especially those equipped with self learning capabilities, to extract valuable insights from big data and respond directly to posts, inquiries, grievances, and other social media interactions in real time (Simon, 2022). This technological advancement enables PR professionals to accomplish tasks that previously demanded considerable effort and time. With AI support, functions such as



developing communication strategies, coordinating campaigns, crafting press releases, managing crisis responses, and archiving digital content can now be completed far more efficiently (Celik et al., 2022).

Crises are unpredictable events that can occur at any time and in any place. Whether triggered by natural disasters or human actions, such incidents can have far reaching effects on businesses, influencing their social, economic, political, and technological environments. During such disruptions, a company's routine operations may be halted, its core functions impaired, or its strategic direction thrown off course (Marufjonovich et al., 2025). In the modern business landscape, organizations are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence-driven solutions to navigate crises more effectively. These technologies support timely decision-making, help reduce operational disruptions, and enhance customer satisfaction by offering proactive and responsive strategies (Krakowski et al., 2023). Crisis management is a vital component of public relations, as it enables organizations to protect and restore their public image and organizational integrity during challenging times. Some crises may even be transformed into strategic opportunities for growth and renewal when handled correctly (Pinto et al., 2020).

In this regard, artificial intelligence has the capability to analyze complex data sets while factoring in probabilities to deliver more insightful and accurate outcomes. For example, AI can be an essential tool for project managers in identifying and addressing risks, an integral aspect of effective crisis management (Li et al., 2024). Risk management involves multiple stages such as identifying, analyzing, planning, monitoring, regulating, and communicating potential threats, and AI enhances these processes through the extraction and interpretation of parametric data (Bah et al., 2025). For instance, AI can analyze past project schedules to predict timelines for future tasks. In crisis situations, it can evaluate the root causes and possible effects of a crisis, as well as the likelihood of various outcomes. With technologies like machine learning, AI can also detect internal and external sources of risk (Wong, 2021). Different teams and work environments can harness AI tools to foresee, evaluate, and anticipate risks related to safety, quality, productivity, and budget constraints. Importantly, AI does more than highlight risks, it also provides dynamic and adaptable strategies for mitigating them (Öztemel et al., 2024). This empowers project managers to act proactively. For example, they might reorganize personnel or strategically schedule operations to handle upcoming demands more efficiently (Rane et al., 2024).

The increasing influence of technology has made the world more interconnected and complex. As risks become more intricate, the demand for swift and effective crisis anticipation, preparedness, and response continues to grow. In today's global environment, where nations and multinational corporations are closely linked, the impact of a crisis can be widespread and far-reaching (Aladawi et al., 2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) offers transformative potential in how businesses manage crises, owing to its advanced data analysis and predictive capabilities. By leveraging big data through systems such as early warning tools, AI can help identify and prevent potential crises before they escalate (Khalifa et al., 2022). Additionally, AI-powered tools for risk assessment and predictive modeling support the development of comprehensive and resilient crisis management strategies (Abid et al., 2021).

AI's ability to process information rapidly becomes particularly valuable during high-stress situations, enabling more accurate, timely, and objective decision making (Sun et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence is increasingly being applied in the field of public relations (PR) for managing media related data. It helps automate repetitive and time-intensive tasks such as text generation, image selection and editing, video production, and responding to customer inquiries (Loukis et al., 2020).

One significant benefit of using AI in media data management is its ability to analyze target audiences (Nenni et al., 2024). By leveraging big data, public relations professionals can gain deeper insights into audience needs and expectations. This data can be sourced from platforms such as social media, surveys, customer databases, online forums, and includes information on customer behaviors, preferences, and demographics (Obiuto et al., 2024). AI's sophisticated features enable this analysis to be performed more quickly and cost efficiently than traditional approaches (Yazdi et al., 2024). As a result, public relations teams can tailor content to meet audience expectations and personalize media messaging accordingly (Panda et al., 2019). Notably, early applications of artificial intelligence in PR included the use of natural language processing to organize media texts (Khan et al., 2022).

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### Potential Risks of Artificial Intelligence Technologies to Public Relations

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly impacted various industries, including public relations (PR), where its influence can be both transformative and disruptive. Ethical concerns have become central to discussions about AI, especially regarding its role in infringing on privacy, spreading misinformation and disinformation, altering traditional automation processes, and other issues (Saeidnia et al., 2025). Among these concerns, privacy invasion stands out as one of the most critical threats AI poses to the public relations profession. AI systems often rely on analyzing vast volumes of user data, much of which is collected through cookies left behind by internet users. However, the methods used to gather this data are controversial. Many users are unaware of the extent to which they are granting access to their personal information. This is largely due to the complexity and length of privacy policies, which obscure how data is collected and used. As a result, individuals may unknowingly consent to data practices that compromise their privacy (Curzon et al., 2021).

Furthermore, data collected through cookies can be exploited by malicious actors. Hackers may re-identify individuals and misuse their personal data for unlawful purposes (Tucker, 2019). In addition, AI tools can be used to manipulate or corrupt data through a tactic known as data poisoning. When AI systems are trained on tainted or unreliably sourced data, it undermines their accuracy and effectiveness (Rumick, 2025). Organizations that depend on such flawed data may face serious reputational damage and setbacks in their public relations strategies.

On the other hand, ethical concerns related to artificial intelligence also bring to light the issue of bias. Increasing attention is being paid to the potential for AI-driven systems to replicate and even amplify human prejudices. This is particularly alarming when AI algorithms are developed using biased data, as it can result in skewed outcomes that unfairly impact individuals during decision-making processes (Williamson et al., 2024).

To mitigate such risks, major tech companies like Microsoft, Amazon, and Google have taken proactive steps by forming ethics committees and introducing ethical guidelines to oversee the development of their AI technologies (Çeber, 2022). Nevertheless, these efforts have not eliminated concerns. In fact, the presence of such bias continues to spark controversy and fuels skepticism about the use of AI in public relations, where fairness and accurate representation are vital.

Additionally, the integration of AI in social media for PR purposes presents both benefits and drawbacks. AI technologies rely on specific algorithms embedded in social media platforms to tailor content to individual user preferences. While this personalization helps users see content most relevant to them, it also creates challenges for businesses. Companies that do not pay for sponsored content may struggle to have their messages appear in users' feeds (Musiyiwa et al., 2023). As the volume of content on social media continues to grow beyond what users can reasonably engage with, businesses increasingly depend on AI algorithms to help deliver targeted messages. However, this reliance also means that many messages may go unseen, as algorithmic prioritization often favors sponsored or highly engaging content (White et al., 2020). This dynamic can limit the visibility of certain PR messages and hinder the effectiveness of communication strategies.

When addressing data privacy, it is crucial to examine how artificial intelligence technologies collect, process, and utilize information. A primary concern lies in the use of algorithms that depend heavily on large datasets and big data analytics. According to Beer (2017), these algorithms are often influenced by opaque data gathered by corporations or government agencies, giving rise to what he describes as the "social power of algorithms." In essence, AI technologies generate predictions and decisions based on personal data derived from individuals' online behaviors, including data collected through cookies. This practice has sparked increasing ethical concern, particularly regarding its application in public relations (Buhmann et al., 2022).

A key topic within this ethical debate is the psychological phenomenon known as AI anxiety, defined as fear or unease surrounding the capabilities and future impact of artificial intelligence (Kim et al., 2025). This anxiety reflects broader public apprehension about how AI may affect individual privacy, autonomy, and trust in digital systems. This issue extends beyond public relations and is relevant across various professional fields. As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into PR and communication practices, a critical question emerges: how can we ensure that AI systems are taught to act ethically? (Hickok, 2021). A study by the Chartered Institute

of Public Relations (CIPR) revealed that 59% of skills specific to public relations cannot be replicated or taught to AI programs and robots (Valin, 2018). This finding raises significant concerns about the potential erosion of ethical standards that PR professionals are committed to maintaining, as AI adoption becomes more widespread.

While the incorporation of AI into public relations is widely seen as inevitable, it brings with it several ethical and professional challenges. One major concern is the potential disruption of core human values and decision-making processes within PR due to AI's limitations in understanding context, emotion, and ethics. Additionally, the growing reliance on AI in routine business operations has sparked fears of job displacement, particularly in the communication and public relations sectors. Such job losses could lead to broader social and economic repercussions (Soueidan et al., 2024).

### Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey approach. Two sampling techniques were used: convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling was used because the participants were easily accessible to the researchers and were selected from a database of industry professionals compiled over time. Snowball sampling was adopted to supplement this database, with known practitioners helping to identify and refer other potential respondents.

The research instrument was adapted from existing literature to align with the specific context of this study (European Communication Monitor, 2019; Zerfass et al., 2020). The survey featured five key questions related to the effect of AI on public relations (PR), in addition to demographic items. Challenges associated with implementing AI in the field were measured using six items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not likely, 5 = very likely).

The survey respondents were professionals in the field of public relations and communication, representing a diverse range of experience levels. A total of 100 individuals completed the questionnaire, comprising 52% males (N = 52) and 48% females (N = 48). Participants were drawn from different sectors: 40% (N = 40) worked in private or corporate organizations, 35% (N = 35) were employed in government or public service, 15% (N = 15) were in agencies or consultancies, and 10% (N = 10) worked with non-profit organizations.

When asked to select their main areas of work, the majority indicated general public relations or communication (N = 85, 85%), followed by media relations/press spokesperson duties (N = 68, 68%). Internal communication and change management (N = 55, 55%), online communication (N = 48, 48%), marketing, branding, and consumer communication (N = 39, 39%), and corporate media/public relations (N = 35, 35%) were also dominant areas of work.

The analysis included both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to interpret the results.

### Results

This section presents the findings of the research. The results are presented according to the research questions.

**RQ1:** What do public relations professionals in Nigeria know about Artificial Intelligence (AI), and to what extent are they already using AI technologies in their daily lives?

**RQ2:** How do public relations professionals evaluate the impact of AI on the profession?

**RQ3:** What challenges do professionals perceive when applying AI to public relations and communication?

**RQ4:** What risks do professionals associate with AI in public relations and communication?

### Analysis

#### RQ1: Awareness and Utilization of Artificial Intelligence

The findings indicate that a majority of respondents can be classified as adopters of artificial intelligence. Specifically, 87% reported using AI-powered assistants on their smartphones, while 58% made use of smart devices either at home or in their workplaces.



To explore the relationship between gender and AI adoption, a chi-square test was conducted. The test revealed no statistically significant association between gender and the use of AI technologies, whether on smartphones or through smart devices at home or at work. In essence, gender did not influence the likelihood of AI adoption among respondents (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Usage of AI and Devices**

| Gender       | Use intelligent assistants on your smartphone |           |            | Use intelligent devices in your home or office |            |            |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
|              | Yes                                           | No        | Don't know | Yes                                            | No         | Don't know |
| Male         | 42 (84.0%)                                    | 6 (12.0%) | 2 (4.0%)   | 30 (60.0%)                                     | 18 (36.0%) | 2 (4.0%)   |
| Female       | 45 (90.0%)                                    | 3 (6.0%)  | 2 (4.0%)   | 28 (56.0%)                                     | 19 (38.0%) | 3 (6.0%)   |
| <b>Total</b> | 87 (87.0%)                                    | 9 (9.0%)  | 4 (4.0%)   | 58 (58.0%)                                     | 37 (37.0%) | 5 (5.0%)   |
|              | $\chi^2(100) = 1.213, p = 0.546$              |           |            | $\chi^2(100) = 0.714, p = 0.700$               |            |            |

The table above displays the distribution of AI assistant and device usage among 100 public relations and communication professionals segmented by gender. Among males, 84% reported using intelligent smartphone assistants, while 60% indicated using intelligent devices at home or the workplace. Among females, 90% used smartphone assistants and 56% used smart devices.

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between gender and AI adoption. The results indicated no significant association between gender and the use of intelligent assistants ( $\chi^2(N = 100) = 1.213, p = 0.546$ ) or smart devices ( $\chi^2(N = 100) = 0.714, p = 0.700$ ).

**Table 2: Perception of AI among Public Relations and Communication Experts**

| AI Description Provided by Respondents                | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Automated decision-making by intelligent programs     | 78.4%          |
| Gaining insights and improving through data learning  | 52.1%          |
| <i>(Tasks supported directly by human input)</i>      | 65.2%          |
| Adjusting to new objectives and unexpected challenges | 45.7%          |
| Understanding and responding to human language        | 50.3%          |
| <i>(Recognizing human emotions)</i>                   | 30.5%          |
| <i>(Possessing all cognitive abilities of humans)</i> | 18.9%          |
| <i>(Feeling emotions like humans)</i>                 | 20.2%          |

**Note:** Definitions marked in parentheses were inaccurately identified as characteristics of AI. Respondents selected from a list of AI descriptions based on their understanding of what AI represents in the field of communication.

**RQ2: Perceived Influence of AI on Public Relations and Communication Management**

Communication and PR specialists in Nigeria generally anticipate a strong influence of artificial intelligence on their field. The participants reported that AI is likely to:

- **Reshape the broader communication and public relations landscape** (Mean = 3.67, SD = 1.09),
- **Transform internal processes within their organizations** (Mean = 3.54, SD = 1.12),
- **Alter their individual roles and daily communication tasks** (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.20).

These insights reveal that despite partial misunderstandings of AI, Nigerian professionals acknowledge its growing presence and transformative impact on both organizational functions and personal responsibilities.

**Table 3: Perceived Impact of AI on PR and Communication Functions**

| AI expected influence                                          | Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| The public relations and communications sector                 | 3.74     | 1.10                    |
| Operational practices within my organization or unit           | 3.56     | 1.14                    |
| My personal work style and daily professional responsibilities | 3.63     | 1.18                    |

**Note:** With the rising integration of AI technologies such as virtual voice assistants (e.g., Siri, Alexa) and algorithms used in digital media platforms, professionals were asked to indicate the level of impact AI is likely to have across different aspects of their work. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very low impact, 5 = Very high impact).

**RQ3: Challenges Adopting AI in Public Relations and Communication**

An essential focus of this study was to explore perceived obstacles in integrating AI into communication and Public Relations activities. Interestingly, findings from the one-sample t-test suggested that professionals generally do not view the introduction of AI as problematic. While respondents recognize the transformative nature of AI across sectors, they do not anticipate major difficulties in accessing or developing essential enablers for implementation. The key factors supporting AI adoption include skill and competence development (74.8%), employee motivation and willingness to use AI tools (79.1%), institutional infrastructure and readiness (64.5%), leadership and managerial support (70.8%), national and societal infrastructure (59.4%), and End-user acceptance (69.7%). These were all viewed as relatively attainable (see Table 4). This optimism reflects growing awareness that AI is not just a futuristic concept but a present-day driver of innovation, already shaping communication practice and professional expectations.

**Table 4: Perceived Barriers to AI Adoption in Public Relations and Communication**  
**RQ4: Challenges of Integrating AI into Public Relations Practices**

A one-sample t-test indicated that professionals largely do not perceive AI as a threat to their roles. Most do not see AI as endangering their job security (71.8%), income (72.1%), employee skill requirements (68.2%), task ownership (69.7%), essential competencies (78.4%), or professional identity (79.1%) (see Table 5). This reflects a strong sense of confidence among respondents in their continued relevance amidst technological advancement. The low mean values are statistically different from the reference score of 4, signaling a notably low level of perceived risk.

| Factors Impeding AI Adoption in Communication Roles                    | M    | SD   | t-value | p-value |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|
| Skills of PR/communication professionals in AI use                     | 2.72 | 1.08 | -18.413 | 0.000   |
| Willingness of PR/communication staff to adopt AI                      | 2.66 | 1.10 | -19.275 | 0.000   |
| Internal infrastructure (e.g., tech, budget, roles)                    | 2.84 | 1.14 | -14.601 | 0.000   |
| Endorsement from leadership and clients                                | 2.80 | 1.12 | -15.728 | 0.000   |
| National infrastructure (e.g., legal regulations, high speed internet) | 3.12 | 1.21 | -11.482 | 0.000   |
| External stakeholder/user acceptance                                   | 2.89 | 1.03 | -15.924 | 0.000   |

**Note:** Participants rated the difficulty of fulfilling various AI implementation requirements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not difficult, 5 = Very difficult). The test value of 4 represents a high level of perceived difficulty.

#### RQ4: Perceived Risk of Integrating AI into Public Relations and Communication

A one-sample t-test revealed that professionals largely do not view AI as a significant threat to their roles, compensation, or the integrity of their profession. The majority did not agree that AI will endanger their job security (72.6%), income (72.8%), workforce competence (68.3%), task clarity (70.9%), essential capabilities (79.3%), or professional identity (79.7%). These results (see Table 5) indicate a prevailing confidence among communication professionals in their ability to adapt and remain relevant despite the acceleration of AI technologies. The notably low mean scores are significantly different from the reference value of 4, underscoring minimal perceived risk.

**Table 5: Perceived Risk of AI in Public Relations and Communication Management**

| Risk Perception Area                                   | M    | SD   | t-test  | p-value |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|
| Communication professionals will lose their jobs       | 2.48 | 1.19 | -19.210 | 0.000   |
| Communication professionals will face reduced salaries | 2.53 | 1.17 | -18.342 | 0.000   |
| Staff competence will be adversely affected            | 2.75 | 1.14 | -15.108 | 0.000   |
| Roles and responsibilities will become unclear         | 2.60 | 1.22 | -16.489 | 0.000   |
| The profession will lose essential core competencies   | 2.18 | 1.21 | -21.804 | 0.000   |
| The profession will lose its distinct identity         | 2.10 | 1.25 | -22.716 | 0.000   |

**Note:** Respondents rated each risk on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Not likely and 5 = Very likely. The test value of 4 reflects a high perceived risk.

#### Discussion and Conclusion

The influence of artificial intelligence (AI) on the public relations and communication profession has been widely acknowledged in academic literature though primarily through conceptual papers and opinion pieces. Empirical research in this area remains limited, with most studies focusing on professionals' awareness, skills, challenges, and adoption of AI technologies. While respondents in this study indicated general awareness and a basic understanding of AI, the overall low mean scores, particularly regarding perceived challenges and risks suggest a limited grasp of the full implications of AI for the profession.

The result from this study disagrees with previous research findings (e.g., CIPR, 2021). For instance, Zerfass et al. (2020) identified professional competencies ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and organizational infrastructure ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) as major barriers to AI integration in communication. In contrast, the present study found these factors to be less of a concern reflected in lower means of 2.18 ( $SD = 1.21$ ) and 2.84 ( $SD = 1.14$ ), respectively. Similarly, perceptions of AI-related risks differed significantly from earlier studies. In the Nigerian context, AI's role in public relations and communication remain a relatively emerging topic both in professional practice and academic discourse. Senior communication practitioners revealed a general awareness of AI but a lack of deeper engagement with its potential effects, risks, and challenges as they have not given full attention to it. Many professionals noted that AI's impact is not yet fully evident and may take time to materialize within the local industry. Others support the view held that AI remains more of an attention grabber than a transformative force in the field (CIPR, 2023).

The findings underscore the urgent need for public relations and communication professionals to become more familiar with AI technologies. There is a clear gap in understanding the full impact of AI on their work and the infrastructural limitations that may hinder its effective adoption. To address this, professionals must take deliberate steps to educate themselves about AI and its implications for the industry.

Although many AI tools can significantly enhance professional practice, merely using these tools in daily life does not amount to professional competence. As Zerfass et al. (2020:386) cautioned, the “learning by doing” approach has its limits. Galloway and Swiatek (2018:734) similarly emphasized the importance of acquiring a solid foundational knowledge of AI without needing to become expert technologists. While AI may never fully replicate human traits such as empathy and emotional intelligence, it still offers opportunities for practitioners to become “masters of the data” (Zerfass et al., 2020:386). Initiating this conversation within the national professional body such as the Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) could be an effective way to drive awareness and encourage proactive engagement with AI across the industry.

AI education should extend beyond current professionals to include those preparing to enter the public relations and communication field. Educators must take the lead in integrating AI into academic discussions and curricula. To do so effectively, they need a solid understanding of AI themselves, something that may require enrolling in specialized certificate programs or training courses. By building their own competence, educators will be better positioned to equip students with the knowledge and skills required in a changing professional landscape. However, this does not imply that educators must instantly become technology experts; rather, they should make consistent efforts to stay informed and relevant.

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