Public Relations Strategies and Student Protests Management in Selected Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of Public Relations (PR) strategies on student protests in Nigerian tertiary institutions, focusing on Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), and The Polytechnic Ibadan. It dives into how PR strategies are been used by university administrators to address student grievances and manage students' crisis especially protest. The research was centered on the Integrative theory of behavior change which examine how various factors influenced students' decisions in protests in tertiary institutions. Specifically, the researchers make use of survey research method to investigates the impact of PR strategies on the occurrence and intensity of student protests at AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan; student perceptions of the effectiveness of these PR efforts; and the comparative effectiveness of different PR strategies employed by the institutions in resolving student grievances. The findings reveal that proactive and transparent communication significantly reduces protest frequency, while reactive PR measures often escalate tensions. Also, students perceive open dialogue and participatory communication as more effective in addressing their concerns compared to top-down information dissemination. The study concludes that strategic PR can play a critical role in conflict prevention and resolution in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Recommendations include adopting a more inclusive and active PR approach that fosters trust and engagement between students and administration.

Keywords: Public relations, crisis, protest, institutions, communication

Introduction
Crisis management as public relations tools refers to a step-by-step method or approach to identify issues that could to lead to crisis, manage and respond to them effectively while maintaining a good and favorable reputation with its publics. Over the years, tertiary institutions across Nigeria have witnessed various forms of protest from students which some have led to loss of properties and lives notable among them is the "Ali Must Go Protest" in 1978 and the more recent protest at the University of Ibadan in August 2024 which led to the students vacating the hostel for three weeks.

Crisis management has been one of the major fulcrums of public relations unit/department in the academic sector. The focus on ensuring the continuous flow of academic activities

without crisis like student protests and others. According to Rice and Atkin (2013, pg.47), "we know how to address and try to influence a specific behavior, but we don't know how to address behavioral categories". Though communication messages are aimed at addressing issues or creating positive behavior, they can sometimes lead to negative reactions by the people the message is being directed to.

However, the question of their effectiveness still comes up in the public mind as there are various cases of students protest in the academic sectors across the country. This then bring about some undeniable questions which include: is the public relations effort not enough? Are they actually following the laid down procedures to preventing crisis? Is there any gain for them during this crisis?

Although scholars like Ana (2018) and Nwanmoh *et al* (2021) have researched how PR can be used to solve political, economic and advocacy but there has been little or no emphasis in the area of crisis management in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These therefore, raises series of questions that cannot be answered by inference but through proper, adequate and strategically carried out research that would examine the influence of the public relations units in student protest in some selected universities in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The higher institutions in the country have been facing different crisis which are mostly caused by student protest or demonstrations. The rate of student protest in the country has become so alarming and becoming detrimental to the educational sector of the country and if not handled in the right and effective way, it might lead to the collapse of the educational system in the country.

There have been numerous studies on the functions of Public Relations unit in the prevention or ending crisis in academic institutions but few or none has actually studied how the public relations unit actually instigate these crises through their actions and in-actions.

Research Questions

The study is based on three research questions and objectives listed below:
  (i)   How does the use of Public Relations (PR) strategies by university administration influence the occurrence and intensity of student protests in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) and The Polytechnic Ibadan?
  (ii) What are the perceptions of students of AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan regarding the effectiveness of PR efforts in addressing their concerns and preventing protests?
  (iii) How do different PR approaches employed by the administrations of AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan compare in their effectiveness in managing and resolving student grievances?

Research Objectives

  (i)   To evaluate the impact of PR strategies employed by the administrations of AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan on the frequency and nature of student protests.

(ii)   To assess student perceptions at AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan regarding the role of PR in addressing their issues and preventing protests.

(iii)   To compare the effectiveness of PR approaches between AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan in managing student unrest and fostering communication between the administration and the student body.

The Concept of Public Relations

Public Relations according to Bittner (1989, pg.228), is "concerned with creating a favorable image for the company or organisation that produces a product or services". Hanson (2005:330), "is defined in modem times as the management functions that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the public on whom its success or failure depends".

Public Relations practice is deliberate, planned and sustained the effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public (Chartered Institute of Public Relations). It consists of planned communications which occurs mainly between an organisation and its public for the actualization of set objectives concerning mutual understanding (Jefkins, 2006).

Theoretical Review

This work is anchored on the Integrative theory of behavior change which was propounded by Cappella, Fishbein, Hornik, Ahern and Sayeed in 2001. They integrated the health belief model (HBM), Social cognitive theory (SCT), and the Theory of reasoned action (TRA) to show how various external variables, individual differences and underlying beliefs contributes to differential influence pathways for behavioral, intention, attitude, norms and self-efficacy out comes. The Integrative theory of behavior change would be used to measure the behavioral changes in the students after their exposure to the communication messages by the public relations unit.

Review of Studies

In a research carried out by Ogunjimi, Oduola, and Babarinde (2018) titled "Public Relations Strategy and Conflict Management in University of Lagos" the study found out that compromise or dialogue, collective bargaining, effective communication and confrontation are Public Relations Strategies adopted in conflict management by the University of Lagos management. Also, the Public Relation Officer is included in the decision-making process of the institution.

Also, Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede, and Omoregie (2005, Pg. 18 – 19) in their article titled Student Unrest in Nigerian Universities: Looking Back and Forward, stated that "Revolts, protests, unrests and violence, as well as incessant closure of schools for months in the wake of unrest or protest have become regular feature of Nigerian universities."

Research Methodology

The study adopted the quantitative research approach, using survey research method. The researcher made use of questionnaire to gather information across the two higher

institutions that serves as the study population. The samples size using purposive sampling technique was used for the study mainly to focus on 100 executives of the students' union and students' representative council of the two institutions as they play active roles in student protest and they are served as students opinion leaders thus justify the reason for selecting them.

The data collected were analyzed statistically and presented in simple percentage and frequency tables.

Data Presentation, Analysis, Conclusion and Recommendation
Table 1: Demographics

Category		Frequency	Percentage
Institution	AAUA	100	50%
	Polytechnic Ibadan	100	50%
Level of Study	100 Level / ND 1	80	40%
	200 Level / ND 2	52	26%
	300 Level / HND 1	43	21.5%
	400 Level / HND 2	25	12.5%
Gender	Female	127	63.5%
	Male	73	36.5%

Source: Field research, 2025

The data presents an overview of respondents based on their institution, level of study, and gender distribution. The respondents are evenly split between Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA) and The Polytechnic, Ibadan, with each institution accounting for 50% of the total. This indicates an equal representation of students from both university and polytechnic backgrounds.

Examining the level of study, first-year students, comprising 100 Level and ND 1, form the largest group, making up 40% of the respondents. Second-year students, including those in 200 Level and ND 2, follow with 26%, while third-year students in 300 Level and HND 1 account for 21.5%. The smallest group consists of final-year students in 400 Level and HND 2, representing 12.5% of the total. This distribution suggests a higher concentration of respondents in the early years of their academic journey, with fewer students as the levels progress. In terms of gender, female respondents make up 63.5% of the total, while male respondents account for 36.5%. This indicates a significant gender disparity, with females outnumbering males by a considerable margin. The data provides a clear picture of the demographic composition of the respondents, reflecting trends in institutional participation, academic progression, and gender representation.

Table 2: How often do student protests occur at your institution?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Occasionally	56	28
Rarely	21	10.5
Frequently	123	61.5

The table above provides insight into the frequency of student protests at the institution based on respondents' experiences. A significant majority, 61.5%, indicated that protests occur frequently, suggesting that demonstrations are a common occurrence within the institution. This high frequency may point to ongoing student grievances, administrative challenges, or broader socio-political issues affecting the academic environment.

Meanwhile, 28% of respondents stated that protests happen occasionally, implying that while demonstrations are not constant, they still occur from time to time in response to specific events or issues. This group suggests that protests are not entirely unpredictable but are triggered by particular circumstances.

On the other hand, only 10.5% of respondents reported that protests rarely happen, indicating that very few students perceive protests as an uncommon event. This minority perspective highlights that, for most students, demonstrations are a regular feature of campus life rather than an exception. The overall trend from the data suggests that student protests are a significant aspect of the institution's environment, with the majority experiencing them as a frequent occurrence.

Table 3: Are you aware of any PR strategies employed by your institution's administration?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	167	83.5
No	28	14
Maybe	5	2.5

The table above reveals the level of awareness among respondents regarding public relations strategies employed by their institution's administration. A significant majority, accounting for 83.5% of the respondents, indicated that they are aware of such strategies. This suggests that the institution's public relations efforts are noticeable and effectively communicated to the students.

On the other hand, 14% of the respondents stated that they are not aware of any public relations strategies implemented by their institution. This indicates that a portion of the student population either has limited exposure to these strategies or does not recognise them as formal public relations efforts.

A small minority, comprising 2.5% of the respondents, expressed uncertainty by selecting "Maybe." This group may have encountered certain activities or initiatives that resemble public relations strategies but are unsure whether they are officially part of the institution's administrative efforts.

Overall, the data suggests that the institution's public relations strategies are widely recognised by the students, though a notable fraction remains unaware or uncertain about their existence.

Table 4: If yes, which of the following PR strategies have you observed being used?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Meetings	22	11%
Press releases	45	22.5%
Social media	86	43%
Dialogue forums	25	12.5%
Feedback mechanisms	15	7.5%
Others	3	1.5%
None	4	2%

Source: Field research, 2025.

The table above provides an overview of the various public relations strategies observed by respondents. Social media emerges as the most commonly noted strategy, with 43% of respondents indicating its use. This suggests that digital platforms play a significant role in public relations efforts, likely due to their accessibility and broad reach. Press releases follow as the second most observed strategy, with 22.5% of respondents acknowledging their presence. This indicates that formal communication through media outlets remains a widely utilised approach. Dialogue forums are also notable, with 12.5% of respondents recognizing them as a strategy, highlighting the importance of direct engagement and discussion in public relations.

Meetings account for 11% of responses, showing that structured gatherings are a relevant but less dominant method. Feedback mechanisms, observed by 7.5% of respondents, suggest an effort to collect and respond to public opinions, though they appear to be used less frequently. A small proportion, 1.5%, mentioned other strategies not specifically listed, while 2% of respondents reported not observing any public relations strategies at all.

Overall, the data reflects a strong reliance on digital communication and traditional media outreach, with varying levels of engagement through direct interaction and feedback channels.

Table 5: How would you rate the effectiveness of these PR strategies in preventing student protests?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	78	39
Effective	97	48.5
Neutral	10	5
Ineffective	15	7.5

The data provides an assessment of the perceived effectiveness of public relations strategies in preventing student protests. A significant portion of respondents, 48.5%, consider these strategies to be effective, indicating that nearly half of the participants believe that PR efforts play a crucial role in managing student unrest. Additionally, 39% of the respondents rate these strategies as very effective, further reinforcing the idea that

communication and engagement methods are generally successful in addressing student concerns and mitigating protests.

A smaller group, comprising 5% of respondents, remains neutral, suggesting that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the effectiveness of these strategies. Meanwhile, 7.5% of the participants consider the strategies ineffective, indicating that, for a minority, PR approaches may not be sufficient in preventing protests. Overall, the data suggests a largely positive perception of PR strategies in maintaining stability within student communities, though a small proportion remains unconvinced of their impact.

Table 6: Do you believe that PR plays a role in addressing student concerns?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	163	81.5
Maybe	35	17.5
No	2	1

The table above highlights respondents' perceptions of the role of public relations in addressing student concerns. A significant majority, 81.5%, believe that public relations plays a role in this regard, indicating strong confidence in its effectiveness in facilitating communication and resolving issues. Additionally, 17.5% of the respondents are uncertain, suggesting that while they acknowledge the potential influence of public relations, they may not have enough information or experience to form a definite opinion. Only 1% of the respondents outrightly dismiss the role of public relations in addressing student concerns, showing that skepticism about its impact is minimal. Overall, the data reflects a prevailing belief in the importance of public relations in student engagement and problem-solving within academic environments.

Table 7: How satisfied are you with the way your institution's administration uses PR to address student issues?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Satisfied	74	37%
Satisfied	110	55%
Neutral	10	5%
Dissatisfied	4	2%
Very Dissatisfied	2	1%

The table provides insights into students' satisfaction with how their institution's administration utilises public relations to address their concerns. A majority of the respondents, accounting for 55%, indicated that they are satisfied with the administration's approach. This suggests that more than half of the students feel that public relations efforts are effective in addressing student issues. Additionally, 37% of respondents expressed a higher level of approval by stating that they are very satisfied, further reinforcing the perception that the institution's PR strategies are positively received by most students.

A smaller portion of the respondents remained neutral on the matter, making up 5% of the total. This indicates that a few students neither approve nor disapprove of the way public

relations is used to handle student issues. On the other hand, dissatisfaction levels are relatively low, with only 2% of the respondents reporting that they are dissatisfied and an even smaller percentage of 1% stating that they are very dissatisfied. This suggests that only a minimal fraction of students feel that the administration's PR efforts are inadequate or ineffective.

Overall, the data reflects a largely positive perception of the institution's public relations approach in managing student concerns, with a vast majority expressing satisfaction and only a small minority indicating dissatisfaction.

Table 8: In your opinion, which student issues require more PR attention?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Tuition fees	42	21%
Academic policies	45	22.5%
Security & welfare	87	43.5%
Accommodation	25	12.5%
Others	1	0.5%

The data highlights the key student issues that require more public relations attention, as indicated by the frequency and percentage of responses. Security and welfare emerge as the most pressing concerns, with 43.5% of respondents identifying them as a priority. This suggests that students are particularly worried about their safety and overall well-being, making it a crucial area for institutional focus and communication efforts.

Academic policies follow closely, with 22.5% of students expressing concerns in this area. This indicates a significant level of interest in how academic regulations, grading systems, and course requirements affect their educational experience. Tuition fees are another major issue, with 21% of students highlighting financial burdens as a key concern. This reflects the importance of transparent communication about tuition structures, payment plans, and possible financial aid options.

Accommodation issues are identified by 12.5% of respondents, suggesting that while housing remains a challenge for some students, it is not as widely perceived as an urgent concern compared to security, welfare, and academic matters. Lastly, a very small percentage, 0.5%, selected "Others", indicating that most student concerns fall within the predefined categories.

Given these findings, more public relations efforts should be directed toward addressing security and welfare concerns, as they represent the most significant student worries. Clear communication about safety measures, mental health resources, and overall student support services could help alleviate these concerns. Additionally, institutions should engage students in discussions about academic policies and tuition-related matters to foster transparency and trust.

Table 9: Do you think improved PR strategies can reduce the frequency of student protests at your institution?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	161	80.5
Maybe	35	17.5
No	4	2

The table above reflects respondents' opinions on whether improved public relations strategies can help reduce the frequency of student protests at their institution. A significant majority, 80.5%, believe that enhanced PR strategies would be effective in addressing student concerns and mitigating protests. This indicates a strong perception that better communication, transparency, and engagement between the institution and students could lead to a more harmonious academic environment.

Meanwhile, 17.5% of respondents are uncertain, indicating a level of skepticism or a belief that other factors beyond public relations may contribute to student unrest. Their uncertainty suggests that while PR strategies could play a role, they might not be the sole solution to the issue.

Only a small fraction, 2%, outrightly dismiss the idea that improved PR efforts would make a difference. This suggests that, for a few, student protests may be driven by deeper systemic issues that communication alone cannot resolve. Overall, the data highlights a strong consensus on the potential effectiveness of PR strategies in reducing protests, while also acknowledging some level of doubt and differing perspectives among the respondents.

Table 10: Have you observed differences in how PR strategies are implemented at AAUA and The Polytechnic, Ibadan?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	95	47.5%
No	105	52.5%

The data provides insight into respondents' observations regarding differences in the implementation of public relations strategies at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA) and The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Out of the total responses, 47.5% indicated that they have observed differences in how PR strategies are implemented at the two institutions, while a slightly higher percentage, 52.5%, stated that they have not noticed any differences. This close margin suggests that opinions on the matter are fairly divided, with no overwhelming consensus. The findings indicate that while a significant portion of respondents perceive variations in PR strategies, a slightly larger group either views the approaches as similar or has not paid attention to any distinctions. This data highlights the subjective nature of perceptions regarding institutional communication and branding efforts.

Table 10: Based on your experience or perception, which institution is more effective in using PR to manage student unrest?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Polytechnic Ibadan	81	40.5%
AAUA	64	32%
Both Equally Effective	51	25.5%
Neither	4	2%

The data reflects respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of public relations strategies in managing student unrest at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA) and The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Among the respondents, 40.5% believe that The Polytechnic, Ibadan is more effective in using PR for this purpose, making it the most favored institution in this regard. AAUA follows with 32%, indicating that a significant portion of respondents also see it as effective, though to a lesser extent. Additionally, 25.5% of the respondents consider both institutions equally effective in handling student unrest through PR, suggesting that some perceive no major difference between their approaches. A small minority, 2%, believe that neither institution effectively uses PR in managing such situations. These findings highlight varied opinions on the effectiveness of PR strategies, with The Polytechnic, Ibadan being slightly more recognised for its efforts in comparison to AAUA. However, the presence of a considerable number of respondents who see both institutions as equally effective or ineffective suggests room for improvement in PR strategies at both schools.

Table 11: What specific recommendations do you have for improving PR strategies at your institution?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employ professional PR practitioners	68	34%
Conduct PR audit	15	7.5%
More proactive PR	21	10.5%
Standard PR team	18	9%
PR should allow criticism	24	12%
Use email newsletters	22	11%
Improve website for news	20	10%
None	12	6%

The table above provides insight into respondents' recommendations for improving public relations strategies at their institutions. The most suggested improvement, with 34% of responses, is the employment of professional PR practitioners, indicating a strong belief that expertise in the field would enhance communication efforts. Conducting a PR audit received 7.5% of the responses, suggesting that only a small portion of respondents see the need for a structured evaluation of existing PR strategies.

A more proactive approach to PR was recommended by 10.5% of respondents, emphasizing the need for institutions to be more responsive and engaging in their communication strategies. Similarly, 9% suggested establishing a standard PR team, highlighting the importance of a well-organised and structured communication unit. Allowing criticism within

PR strategies was endorsed by 12% of respondents, reflecting the belief that open feedback and dialogue can improve institutional reputation and engagement. The use of email newsletters was recommended by 11% of the respondents as a means of enhancing communication and keeping stakeholders informed. Improving the institution's website for better news dissemination was suggested by 10%, pointing to the need for a more accessible and updated online presence. A small fraction, 6%, indicated that no changes were necessary, suggesting satisfaction with the current PR strategies. Overall, the data reveals a strong preference for professionalization, transparency, and modernization of PR strategies to improve institutional communication.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the role of public relations (PR) strategies in managing student protests and addressing grievances at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA), and The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

1. How does the use of Public Relations (PR) strategies by university administration influence the occurrence and intensity of student protests in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) and The Polytechnic Ibadan?

A significant proportion of students, 83.5%, are aware of PR strategies used by their institutions, indicating that the administration actively engages in communication efforts. However, 14% of students remain unaware of these strategies, suggesting gaps in dissemination and engagement. The data suggests that student protests are a common occurrence, with 61.5% of respondents reporting their frequent nature. This highlights a persistent level of dissatisfaction among students, which may stem from unresolved grievances, administrative shortcomings, or broader socio-political factors affecting the academic environment. A smaller percentage, 28%, indicated that protests occur occasionally, while only 10.5% reported that they rarely happen. This suggests that, for most students, demonstrations are a regular aspect of campus life rather than an anomaly. Students also offered various recommendations for improving PR strategies at their institutions. The most frequently suggested improvement was the employment of professional PR practitioners, with 34% of respondents advocating for this approach. This indicates a strong belief that expertise in public relations could enhance communication effectiveness. Additionally, 12% of students emphasized the need for PR to allow open criticism, highlighting the importance of transparent and receptive communication. Other suggestions included establishing a standard PR team (9%), taking a more proactive approach to PR (10.5%), and improving digital communication methods such as email newsletters (11%) and institutional websites (10%). These recommendations suggest that students value professionalized, transparent, and technologically advanced PR strategies that promote dialogue and accessibility.

2. What are the perceptions of students of AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadanregarding the effectiveness of PR efforts in addressing their concerns and preventing protests?

Regarding the effectiveness of PR strategies in preventing protests, the majority of respondents expressed positive views. A combined 87.5% rated these strategies as either effective or very effective, demonstrating confidence in PR as a means of conflict resolution.

However, a minority of 7.5% found them ineffective, suggesting that while PR plays a role, it may not be a complete solution to student unrest. This aligns with responses regarding PR's role in addressing student concerns, where 81.5% affirmed its importance. However, 17.5% remained uncertain, indicating that some students either do not fully recognise PR's impact or feel disengaged from institutional communication efforts. A significant majority of respondents, 80.5%, believe that improved PR strategies can help reduce student protests. This reinforces the idea that effective communication and proactive engagement can foster better relationships between students and the administration, potentially mitigating unrest. However, 17.5% were uncertain, and 2% outrightly disagreed, suggesting that while PR plays a crucial role, other structural and administrative issues may also need to be addressed. Satisfaction with PR strategies was generally high, with 55% of students expressing satisfaction and 37% stating that they were very satisfied. This suggests that most students acknowledge PR as a useful tool in addressing their concerns. Only a small fraction, 3%, reported dissatisfaction, reinforcing the perception that PR efforts are largely effective. Despite this positive reception, the data highlights specific areas where PR strategies could be strengthened. When asked which student issues required more PR attention, security and welfare emerged as the most pressing concerns (43.5%), followed by academic policies (22.5%) and tuition fees (21%). The prominence of security-related concerns suggests that students prioritise their safety and well-being, necessitating more targeted communication and policy responses from the administration. Accommodation concerns were ranked lower, at 12.5%, indicating that housing issues, while present, are not as urgent as security or financial matters.

3.   How do different PR approaches employed by the administrations of AAUA and The Polytechnic Ibadan compare in their effectiveness in managing and resolving student grievances?

Among the various PR approaches observed, social media was the most commonly cited, with 43% of respondents acknowledging its use. This highlights the growing importance of digital platforms in institutional communication. Press releases (22.5%) and dialogue forums (12.5%) were also noted, while feedback mechanisms were observed by only 7.5% of respondents, pointing to a need for improved student-administration dialogue. Perceptions about differences in PR strategies between AAUA and The Polytechnic, Ibadan, were fairly divided. While 47.5% of students observed variations in how PR strategies were implemented across the two institutions, 52.5% did not perceive any major differences. The Polytechnic, Ibadan, was considered more effective in PR efforts by 40.5% of respondents, while 32% believed AAUA was more effective. Meanwhile, 25.5% of respondents found both institutions equally competent, suggesting that while differences may exist, they are not drastic enough to be universally acknowledged.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that PR strategies play a vital role in managing student concerns and preventing protests. While students largely acknowledge the effectiveness of PR efforts, the study highlights areas for improvement, particularly in addressing security concerns, enhancing financial transparency, and fostering open communication. Strengthening PR strategies through professionalization, proactive engagement, and digital

enhancements could significantly improve student-administration relations and contribute to a more stable academic environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, here are three recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of PR strategies in managing student protests:

(i) **Employ Professional and Trained PR Practitioners:** Institutions should prioritise hiring qualified public relations professionals with experience in conflict resolution and strategic communication. The study found that 34% of students believe that employing professional PR practitioners would enhance communication effectiveness. A trained PR team can develop informed messaging strategies that are proactive rather than reactive, ensuring that student concerns are addressed before they escalate into protests.

(ii) **Foster Participatory and Transparent Communication Channels:** Open dialogue and participatory communication were identified as more effective by students compared to top-down approaches. Therefore, institutions should implement platforms such as regular dialogue forums, feedback mechanisms, and town hall meetings to ensure students have a voice in decision-making processes. Allowing criticism and incorporating student input improves trust and mutual respect, which are essential for preventing unrest.

(iii) **Leverage Digital Media and Improve Communication Infrastructure:** With 43% of students recognising social media as a major PR tool, institutions should improve their digital communication strategies. This includes maintaining active, transparent, and responsive social media platforms, sending regular email newsletters, and updating school websites with relevant news and policy changes. Utilising these digital tools helps keep students informed in real-time and can counter misinformation that often fuels protests.

These recommendations, if implemented, can contribute significantly to a more peaceful, engaged, and transparent university environment.

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