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Interrogating Public Sector Communication System in the Context of Democratisation of Governance in Nigeria's Kwara State, 2015-2019

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Abstract

In a world filled with diminishing public trust in government, the role of public sector communication (PSC) cannot be underestimated. Therefore, this study critically examined the components of the PSC system and its main subjects during the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State from 2015 to 2019. The study also interrogated how stakeholders, including journalists, Public Relations practitioners, and civil society organisation, fit into PSC during the period in focus. The study adopted Democratic-Participant Media theory as its theoretical framework. The reason is that the theory underscores the importance of a pluralistic media landscape in creating awareness and promoting public engagement with democratically elected governments. To achieve the set objectives, the study used key informant interviews (KIIs) to obtain qualitative data from key stakeholders, including media aides appointed by the selected administration, among others listed in the research objectives. Data from the KIIs were presented and analysed thematically with the aid of DeepSeek and Grok AI tools. It was found that despite the robust PSC system of the selected administration, it failed to match its words with actions regarding the overall wellbeing of the citizenry. The study, therefore, recommends that successive administrations in the state should operate a genuine PSC system for all-inclusive governance.

Keywords: Accountability; good governance; public sector communication; public trust; transparency

Introduction

Public and private organisations in different parts of the world are driven by different objectives for effective and efficient service delivery to their target publics. However, unlike the private sector, whose primary goal is profit maximisation, the public sector is focused

on service to the public (Edino & Agba, 2015). The public sector comprises government entities, such as ministries, departments, and agencies that implement government policies and provide essential services to citizens without profit motives. More specifically, it covers executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government, as well as security agencies, and the three tiers of government, such as federal, state, and local governments (Adamolekun, 1983, as cited in Inakefe et al., 2021; Radebe, 2014).

To make life meaningful for the citizenry, government officials are assigned various responsibilities, ranging from federal to state and down to the grassroots level. Similarly, there are distinct chains of communication and policies that guide the activities of both elected and appointed government officials. In fact, communication is key to the success of public sector activities, as it engenders the actualisation of development goals and an all-inclusive governance (Suleiman, 2018).

Additionally, feedback plays an important role in ensuring effective communication between the government and members of the public (Edino & Agba, 2015; Okwechime, 2015; Wilson & Ibietan, 2013). That is why the government often employs feedback mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness or otherwise of its policies, strategies, decisions, and programmes. These feedback mechanisms include, but are not limited to, press conferences, public hearings, town hall meetings, radio and television phone-in programmes and memoranda. Feedback is also possible through the new media, including government websites, social media platforms, and email newsletters (April, 2023). Above all, both civilian and military governments attach importance to communication in their day-to-day activities (Edino & Agba, 2015; Obun-Andy & Banjo, 2021). Despite the fact that the former (civilian government) is guided by constitutional provisions, which guarantee freedom of expression, while the latter (military rule) is guided by decrees, the two cannot communicate.

However, this study focuses only on the executive arm of government in Kwara State, North-Central Nigeria. More specifically, the study concentrates on the first term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, from 2015-2019. The motive is to understand how the administration used the public sector communication system to connect effectively with citizens and to entrench good governance and foster public trust in the state within the period under review.

Problem Statement

The need for transparency, accountability, and trust makes public sector communication (PSC) inevitable in the day-to-day activities of governments at all levels (International Federation of Accountants, 2022; Leo & Abdullahi, 2024; Orlov et al., 2021). However, studies on public sector communication appear to be limited, with different fields contributing to the research area. These include "political communication; public relations and strategic communication; corporate communication; government communication; and public administration and public management" (Luoma-aho & Canel, 2020, p.11). Similarly, topics like public sector communication were rarely given full attention by scholars until 1992, when Doris Appel Graber authored a book entitled *Public Sector Communication: How Organizations Manage Information* (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). Since then, scholars have continued to study public sector communications in both developed and developing countries. However, studies in this area appear to be much more concentrated on the advanced countries of the world than on the emerging democracies like Nigeria.

Consequently, this study focuses on Kwara State, Northcentral Nigeria, with a view to interrogating how the selected administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in 2015

through 2019 employed the public sector communication system to foster public trust and entrench good governance in the state.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

i. Examine the public sector communication (PSC) approaches of the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019; and
ii. Understand the main subjects of PSC deployed by the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019; and
iii. Interrogate how stakeholders, such as journalists, Public Relations practitioners, and civil society organisation in Kwara State, fitted into the PSC of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, from 2015-2019.

Research Questions

The following questions are central to the study:

i. What were the public sector communication (PSC) approaches of the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019?
ii. What were the main subjects of PSC deployed by the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019?
iii. How did stakeholders, including journalists, Public Relations practitioners, and civil society organisation in Kwara State, fit into the PSC of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, from 2015-2019?

Literature review

Public sector communication and good governance

Etymologically, the phrase 'public sector communication' is derived from Latin words, such as 'publicus', which means 'public'; 'sector', which means division or branch (Canel & Sanders, 2012; Lovari et al., 2020a) and 'communicare', meaning 'to share' or 'to make common' (Inobemhe et al., 2023). Essentially, communication is central to the public sector, given that it provides the lubricant that supports the wheel of government engagement with citizens.

As pointed out in the statement of the problem, Canel and Luoma-aho (2019) had noted that public sector communication (PSC) was hardly given full attention by scholars until 1992 when Doris Appel Graber authored a book, entitled *Public Sector Communication: How Organizations Manage Information*. Notwithstanding, the scholars acknowledged the pioneering contributions of McCamy (1939), Dorsey Jr. (1957), Redfield (1958), and Thayer (1961) to the evolution of public sector communication scholarship through their works focusing on public relations in public administration; administrative communication, communication in management; and administrative communication, respectively.

Additionally, Canel and Luoma-aho (2019) recognised Highsaw and Bowen (1965) as the first authors with a more fully focused work on public sector communication. The scholars further explained that the concept of "public sector" had been widely used by different researchers in connection with "reputation", "branding", "public relations", "communication management", and "mediatization", while "public sector communication" was only used by Graber (1992), Pandey and Garnett (2006), Glenny (2008), and Canel and Luoma-aho (2015).

In view of the foregoing background, Canel and Luoma-aho (2019, p. 33) defined public sector communication as: "Goal-oriented communication inside organisations and between organizations and their stakeholders that enables public sector functions within their

specific cultural and/or political settings, with the purpose of building and maintaining the public good and trust between citizens and authorities."

Lovari et al. (2020a) noted that the above definition summed up the age-long debate around the nonpartisan nature of communication emanating from public sector organisations (PSOs), such as governments at all levels, municipalities, health authorities, and universities, among others. Typically, public sector communication is driven by service delivery, transparency, accountability and pubic engagement, which are the hallmarks of good governance (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; April, 2013; Fredriksson & Pallas, 2018). Public sector communication is tailored to promote social mobilisation, public engagement, political stewardship and feedback. Its effective use guarantees public confidence and trust through deliberate and well-thought-out dissemination of information on government policies and programmes to members of the public and other stakeholders. However, the challenge of poor relationship between government and citizens has persisted, because of the bureaucratic nature of public sector operations, coupled with the changing media landscape and the global financial and economic crises (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; April, 2013; Fredriksson & Pallas, 2018).

Public Sector Communication and Public Trust

Public sector communication is driven by public trust and accountability (Grimmelikhuisjen, 2012; Ruijer, 2013; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). This implies that the level of trust a government enjoys determines its popularity among the citizenry. Therefore, trust may be easily understood as holding a positive perception about the activities of people, individuals or organisations, as it imbues people with confidence that others will behave in the way they are expected to do. While trust may be based on actual experience, it is often a subjective phenomenon, based as much on interpretation or perception as on facts (OECD, 2017). The United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (2021), described trust, especially in public institutions and organisation, as the basis of the social contract. It further stated that, given a situation of uncertainty regarding the conduct of a certain actor, trust is the belief that this conduct will conform to a certain set of positive expectations.

Also, UNDP (2021) explained that public trust is called vertical trust, which connotes the trust members of a community have in institutions presiding over them, while that which members of the community have in each other is called horizontal trust. According to Tanny and Al-Hossienie (2019), public trust is a foundation of a legitimate regime because in a system of circuitous democracy, people delegate their sovereignty to the actors of public and political institutions, believing such a mandate will be operated in an exact way. On the contrary, a legitimate government becomes spurious when showed up failing multifarious duties of the state by snowing under responsibilities.

Urbániková and Smejkal (2023) conceptualised trust as the readiness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor. Good governance is key to public trust, and in achieving the above, Okwechime (2015) observed that one concept that is central to good governance, sustainable development, and effective communication is the fulfilment of basic human needs. This is intricately related to communication. For these reasons, communication has been called a personal and social necessity, making it indispensable to good governance and to development in a forward-looking society (Okwechime, 2015).

According to OECD (2017), two main factors that breed public trust are competency and values. Instructively, a competent government provides citizens-oriented services that carefully address the needs and expectations of the people. It will also strive to maintain

high level of certainty and predictability in the social and political environment of its citizens. OECD (2017) further stressed that a government is value-based when it promotes integrity through the alignment of public institutions with broader standards of conduct and undertakes to safeguard the public interest, reduce or eliminate corruption, and promote fairness in both the processes and outcomes of public policy.

Theoretical framework

The study adopts Democratic-Participant Media Theory (DPMT) as its theoretical framework. The reason is that the theory focuses on the democratisation of the media industry to foster public awareness and engagement with democratically elected governments at all levels. The theory, according to Okoro and Abodunrin (2020), was proposed by Dennis McQuail in 1987 as an addition to the traditional four theories of the press. It captures the nature of development in a monopolised and bureaucratic media environment. Anaeto et al. (2012) opined that the theory came as a response to the dominant nature of the elite in the media landscape. It also emerged as a response to political and economic pressure on the media. Besides, the theory came up because of the disaffection with the previous ones, like libertarian and social responsibility (Mojaye & Lamidi, 2015).

Folarin (2006) averred that the central thesis of DPMT is to disrupt the commercial and professional hegemony of the media industry. This fits into the position of Shah, 2010 (as cited in Asemah et al., 2022), where the scholar argued that the thrust of DPMT is that it came to oppose the top-down approach and commercialisation of the media industry. According to Asemah et al. (2022), the basic assumptions of the theory suggest that everyone and every part of society should have access to the media, so as to air their views and achieve self-determination. Further, the theory also calls for democratisation of the media landscape, such as the establishment of local media by local communities. Baran and Davis (as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2013) argued that the theory advocates media support for cultural pluralism at the grassroots level, with media being used as a tool for stimulating and empowering pluralistic groups. What this implies in the view of Anaeto et al. (2012) is that media must accept and function as agents of development, while freedom of the media should be extended to the economic and development needs of society. It can also be deduced from the theory that news that connects developing countries with their counterparts should be prioritised, and that journalists and other media persons have responsibilities and freedom in the course of their job. Thus, the theory provides a framework that can spur development communication.

Johnson and Johnson (2013) noted that the DPMT presupposes that there must be equal access to media, notwithstanding the social status of the people. Participation in societal decision-making and involvement in communication activities should not be the exclusive preserve of the rich but of all citizens (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). The scholars situated the assumptions of the DPMT within theories that provide a solid foundation for communication policy and a determinant factor shaping media systems and practices in modern society. To this end, the theory advocates the detachment of public broadcasting organisations from the elite, as the media have become too important to be left in the hands of professionals alone and being slavish to professional ideals (Mojaye & Lamidi, 2015).

However, the theory appears to overgeneralise the power of the audience without taking into account the limited resources available to float a community media organisation, as well as the bureaucratic bottlenecks that characterise the approval for the establishment of terrestrial broadcasting stations in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the theory is considered relevant to the current study, in view of its applicability to public sector communication,

which discourages a top-down communication approach between governments and citizens.

Empirical Review

A study by Zakariyau and Alawode (2022) examined the communication strategies employed by the Federal Government (FG) to drive its "Green Alternative Policy" among farmers in rural communities in Kwara South. One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the channels of awareness of the FG's agricultural promotion programmes among farmers in the selected rural communities. Using the survey method to generate data from a sample size of 384 respondents drawn from a total population of 706,848, the study employed multistage sampling technique and descriptive statistics to analyse its data. It found, among other things, that radio served as the respondents' primary and most effective source of information about the FG's agricultural initiative. However, the study established that the farmers could not act on the information due to lack of agricultural extension service providers to guide them on how to benefit from the facilities promised by the government through the policy framework. It, therefore, recommends resuscitation of extension services in rural communities for the benefit of farmers.

Studies by Ajayi and Isinkaye (2021) and Okoji and Azeez (2023), respectively, underscored the importance of government-citizen engagement through the use of social media, which is also very relevant to the current study. In the same vein, Egielewa (2021) conducted a quantitative study on how Twitter (now X) users engaged with two spokespersons of former President Muhammadu Buhari. The researcher sought to investigate how the duo, including Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, and the Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Garuba Shehu, engaged with their followers on Twitter, and how they (Twitter users) in turn, consumed the information and became aware of government developmental strides. The study found that the presidential spokespersons focused more on election and campaign issues than other issues considered as utmost concern to their followers, with more male followers declaring that their lives were not impacted by the information they got from the social media platform.

Moreover, UNDP (2021) cited a 2017 Pew Research Centre Study conducted in 38 countries, which revealed the variations in trust towards government with the percentage of people trusting their government to do "what is right for the country" ranging from 12 to 89 percent. This may suggest that good service delivery is a key factor in public trust.

Similarly, a 1958-2023 study by the Pew Research Centre indicated a decline in Americans' trust in their government. Another study by Bickham and Francis (2021) found that the central government was considered the least trustworthy by the majority of respondents, compared with state and local governments, regarding information dissemination during the COVID-19 pandemic in the US. Rainie and Perrie, 2019 (as cited in Bickham & Francis, 2021, p.191) alluded to a 2018 study by Pew Research Center, which found that the majority of its respondents accused the federal government and the media of withholding information that could have been beneficial to the public.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research design, using key informant interviews (KIIs) as a method to generate data from nine purposefully selected participants. These included two key media aides and a Commissioner for Information appointed by the former governor AbdulFatah Ahmed; three journalists, including two leaders of the Kwara State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ); and a former correspondent of the News Agency of

Nigeria (NAN) in Kwara State, the trio of whom covered the activities of the selected administration. Also included in the qualitative study was a representative of civil society group, called Elites Network for Sustainable Development (ENetSuD). Additionally, two leaders of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in the state were purposefully selected. The selected participants are key to the study because of their in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and their roles as key stakeholders in the administration under review. The key informants, categorised into two, including political appointees and stakeholders in Kwara State, are coded as follows:

Table 1. Key Informants' titles and codes

SN	Status	Code
1	Media Aide to the Governor I	InfFPA 1
2	Media Aide to the Governor II	InfFPA 2
3	Commissioner for Information	InfFPA 3
4	NAN ex-correspondent	InfNUJ 4
5	Leader of Kwara NUJ I	InfNUJ 5
6	Leader of Kwara NUJ II	InfNUJ 6
7	NIPR leader I	InfNIPR 7
8	NIPR leader II	InfNIPR 8
9	CSO representative	InfCSO 9

The researchers used an interview guide, otherwise called interview protocol, to conduct semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with the participants. To avoid misrepresentation, the interview sessions were recorded after securing the participants' consent. The researchers chose the semi-structured approach to elicit robust responses from the participants through follow-up questions where necessary. Data from the KIIs were presented and analysed thematically with the aid of DeepSeek and Grok AI tools.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section focuses on the data generated from semi-structured interviews conducted with the selected key informants. They were very conversant with the subject matter of public sector communication as it affects the second term administration of former Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed (2015-2019). Data from the interviews were analysed thematically and key findings were discussed in line with the research questions (RQs) as presented below:

RQ1: What were the public sector communication (PSC) approaches of the second term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019?

The above research question/theme was analysed under the sub-theme, "Social Programmes, Media and Community Engagements." This indicates that the second-term administration of former Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed employed public-sector communication approaches as part of its overarching agenda, "Shared Prosperity." This involves social programmes targeted at community empowerment and public engagement initiatives, to foster public buy-in and address societal needs. According to InfFPA 1:

> The Shared Prosperity policy was aimed at positioning the AbdulFatah Ahmed-led administration as high-performing and purposeful through the marketing of these innovative programmes, thereby carving a niche for Kwara by highlighting its Unique Selling Points (USPs) and identifying a simple, unifying slogan to which government officials at all levels could relate in the performance of their duties and that the people could also relate to (Personal Communication, October 23, 2025).

InfFPA 1 added that the administration used local languages to reach out to the grassroots through radio programmes and drama skits to explain policies like tax payment and health insurance, making complex information more accessible to the general populace. According

to the informant, "The Governor was on the radio every other month to do *The Governor Explains*, to explain government policies in Yoruba, English and Hausa and also to receive feedback from the public."

The above view is echoed by InfFPA 2's reference to project-specific engagements, noting, "During our time, the ministries or the commissioners involved directly in major projects together with SA Media, always address the press and then they took questions from the press (Personal Communication, October 27, 2025).

Additionally, InfFPA 3 pointed to educational and community-oriented activities, explaining, "Sometimes, we used to have various programmes for schools, and then they would organise competitions, and all of those are rather unfortunately lacking now," (Personal Communication, October 28, 2025).

Similarly, InfFPA 3 pointed to rotational media appearances aimed at ensuring all-inclusive communication and public engagement, explaining, "All commissioners at least rotated every month, but we, the media people, of course, ours was practically every day. Sometimes, I would appear somewhere on television. It might be a radio programme; it might be a TV programme. I was on Channels, I was on TVC for people that do not stay in Kwara per se, and they had the opportunity to watch all of these on cable TV."
InfFPA 2 explained that aside from the use of conventional media platforms, the administration of former Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed also deployed social media to engage with citizens, pointing out that:

> Apart from issuing press statements, we'll also invite them for press briefing from time to time. We also have various social media within the office of the Chief Press Secretary, where we directly share information on the different platforms. We also engage few competent hands to help us share information, from time to time (Personal Communication, October 27, 2025).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the administration in focus used different approaches to communicate with citizens and other stakeholders in the state. The rationale behind the adopted approaches may not be unconnected with the need to give all stakeholders a sense of belonging through inclusive policies and programmes. This, in part, supports studies by Ajayi and Isinkaye (2021) and Okoji and Azeez (2023), respectively, which underpinned the significance of government-citizen engagement through the deployment of social media, among other channels. The finding also supports another study by Zakariyau and Alawode (2022), which investigated the communication strategies used by the Federal Government to drive its "Green Alternative Policy" among farmers in rural communities in Kwara South. The result is also consistent with one of the core assumptions of Democratic-Participant Media Theory, supporting democratised media landscape, which allows for bottom-up communication process between government and citizens.

RQ 2: What were the main subjects of PSC deployed by the second term administration of governor AbdulFatah Ahmed in Kwara State, from 2015-2019?

The above research question/theme is considered under the subtheme, "Specific Subjects Covered in PSC." These subjects, as indicated by infFPA 1, infFPA 2, and infFPA 3, covered different sectors, such as agriculture, finance, education, health, and infrastructure, with communications tailored to policy blueprints and public enlightenment to ensure accountability and impact measurement. According to InfFPA 1:

> Well, this was multifaceted. There was the part where it built on the Shared Prosperity agenda. The Shared Prosperity agenda, which spanned the two-term

> administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, was a strategic policy document that provided a blueprint for all government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in the state. It was condensed into four thematic areas for easy understanding and implementation. whether it's in terms of access to water, whether it's access to health, whether it's access to entrepreneurial education, or Ivy Tech. These were part of the things upon which the Shared Prosperity agenda was built (Personal Communication, October 23, 2025).

This aligns with InfFPA 2's allusion to governance and resource allocation as key subjects of the administration's PSC.

> Well, the major topic that we addressed was always the issue of governance and the issue of resource allocation. For instance, if the Commissioner for Finance came back from the allocation committee in Abuja, with the federal allocation to his state, we needed to go and tell the people what we wanted to use the money for and as at that time, the projects that were discussed at the Exco meeting, the beneficiaries, those who got the contract and the sum for which the contract was awarded and the timeframe for which the contract was supposed to be delivered (Personal Communication, October 27, 2025).

Additionally, InfFPA 3 provided sector-specific examples, explaining, "We talked about all of the sectors; there is no specific one. It's all the sectors, Agric, everything... But it's not as if a particular sector had a particular technique," (Personal Communication, October 28, 2025). As indicated above, securing public confidence in government requires policies, programmes, and services that make life better for the citizenry. This cuts across all sectors of the economy and requires transparency and accountability, which are the hallmarks of good governance. However, this finding contradicts the one by Egielewa (2021), which established that the two spokespersons of former President Muhammadu Buhari prioritised election and campaign issues over others considered as the utmost concern to their followers.

RQ 3: How did stakeholders, including journalists, Public Relations practitioners, and civil society organisation in Kwara State, fit into the PSC of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, from 2015-2019?

The above research question is addressed from the perspectives expressed by three groups – journalists, public relations practitioners, and representatives of Civil Society Organisation. All informants highlighted their roles within the PSC system of the selected administration: as amplifiers, mediators, and watchdogs. According to InfNUJ 5:

> We, as journalists, are not supposed to be partisan; we understand what is happening. But even then, when we relay information from the government because of the trust deficit, we had problems in educating the public. We had to convince them that these are not our policies but those of the government (Personal Communication, October 21, 2025).

However, InfNUJ 4, who described his role in the government PSC system as intermediary, underpinned the paradox of trust deficit in the government's communication, particularly as it concerns citizens' welfare and general wellbeing.

> If you are found to be inconsistent with what you dish out, then you begin to betray the trust... So, if you are not matching your communication with your action, that is where the problem starts. As engaging as the communication was that time, what people are saying about governance is different from what people are really saying

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> about what the government was communicating (Personal Communication, October 21, 2025).

The above views were expressed by other stakeholders, including. InfNIPR 7 and InfNIPR 8, who described their roles as external mediators and crisis managers. For instance, InfNIPR 8 explained:

> There was a crisis between the CPS and some bloggers... The Akoguns published against his principal... CPS was not cool about it. They were arrested...eventually it was us, by the grace of God, the Public Relations experts, that had to mediate under crisis management and crisis communication, to be able to bring the two parties together and settle it (Personal Communication, October 23, 2025).

However, InfCSO 9 harped on the lack of transparency and public distrust in the PSC of the selected administration, describing the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act as a media-extended tool often relied upon by Civil Society Organisations, to promote transparency and accountability in government. InfCSO 9 recalled an encounter with the administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed, saying:

> We engaged Fatai Ahmed --- that the project that was commenced by Bukola Saraki and completed by you, up till this moment, the people of Ilorin are still suffering from water. So, why are you not doing any commissioning?... The government of Megida did not reply to us. So, we released a press statement... Sahara Reporters published the press statement... and before you know it, Megida commissioned the project. We forced them to commission the project.

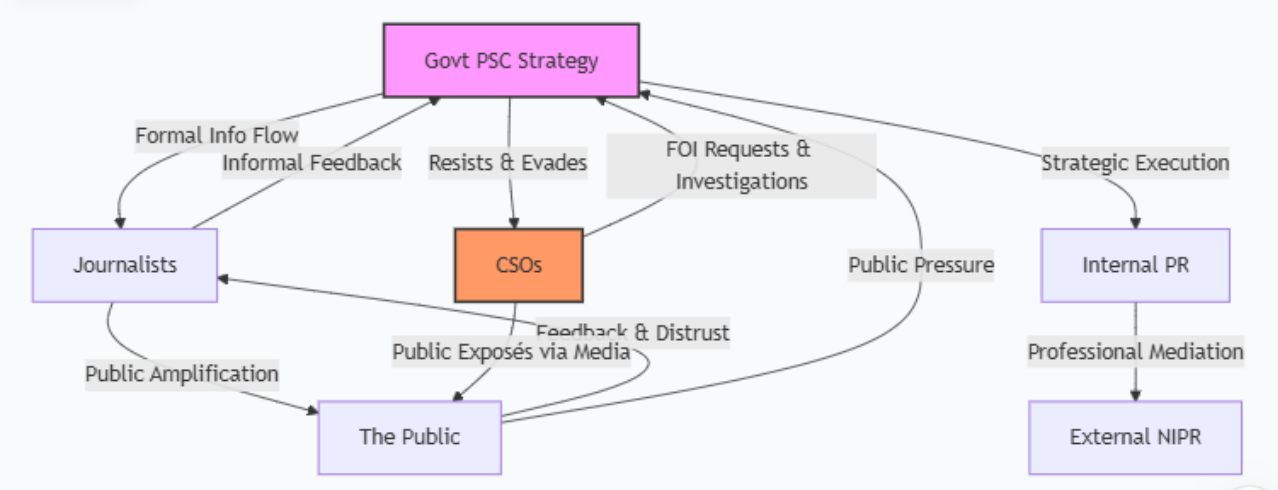
Similarly, all the aforementioned stakeholders attributed the failure of the second-term administration of Governor AbdulFatah Ahmed to its inability to match its PSC with action, especially its failure to pay workers' salaries fully and regularly.

> Workers were paid in percentage and that had a kind of negative effect on the economy of the state. It weakened the purchasing power of the people. Market women were complaining. The economy wasn't moving. Parents found it difficult to send their children to school and pay school fees, and all fingers were being pointed at the government at that time (Personal Communication, October 21, 2025).

The above findings are in agreement with a 2017 Pew Research Centre Study conducted in 38 countries, which found variations in trust towards government, with the percentage of people trusting their government to do "what is right for the country" ranging from 12 to 89 percent. The current finding is also in consonance with a 1958-2023 study by the Centre, which showed a decline in Americans' trust in their government. Additionally, this revelation supports findings by Adaba and Boio (2024), to the effect that the political institutions were least trusted by Africans, as against the religious leaders, the army, and traditional rulers, who were most trusted by the citizens.

Figure 1: Stakeholder PSC Ecosystem (2015-2019)

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This chart maps the primary flow of PSC and the nature of the relationship between the selected administration and each stakeholder within the period under review.

Conclusion and recommendation

Public sector communication can only achieve its goals if target audiences trust the communicators and the communication itself. Additionally, the media play a central role in creating awareness and shaping public perception of government policies and programmes, and by extension, fostering public engagement with policymakers and administrators at all levels. However, the study has shown that the selected administration's public sector communication system failed to genuinely engage with key stakeholders, who serve as eyes and ears of the public. Similarly, the identified disconnect between PSC and government actions contradict democratic ethos of transparency and accountability at all levels of governance; a situation whereby government invests heavily in multi-layered public sector communication approaches without commensurate impact on the overall wellbeing of citizens can, at best, be described as a mere propaganda.

In light of the foregoing, the study recommends that the successive civilian administrations in Kwara State should prioritise genuine citizen engagement by matching their words with actions, to bring about quality representation and all-inclusive dividends of democracy in the state.

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