

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UNIMAC)

**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST IN
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF THE
NATIONAL AMBULANCE SERVICE, GHANA**

BY

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS,
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COMMUNICATION (UNIMAC) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A
MASTER OF ARTS IN STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT**

NOVEMBER ,2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's signature 


Date 06/11/2025

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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the project work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project work laid down by the University of Media Arts and Communication (UNIMAC).

Supervisor's signature 

Date 06/11/2025

Supervisor's Name: Dr. George Asamoah

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife, Shakeeratu Chentiwuni Abd-Allah, whose love, patience, and unwavering support have been my greatest source of inspiration throughout this academic journey. To my wonderful children, Jayden Kofi Kwabeng Boateng and Jane Afia Adukwei Boateng, your smiles and laughter have been the light that guided me through every challenge.

I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. George Asamoah, for his invaluable guidance, mentorship, and encouragement during this study.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, using the National Ambulance Service (NAS) as a case study. The study used a mixed-methods cross-sectional design. The population comprises both adult residents of urban and peri-urban communities in Greater Accra, as well as key personnel from the National Ambulance Service (NAS). The study used a stratified random sampling technique to collect the data from 132 respondents out of the expected 138 respondents using a structured questionnaire and interview guide, using SPSS version 27 to analyse the data. The regression revealed a highly significant and well-fitting model with an R^2 value of 0.702, signifying that approximately 70.2% of the variation in public trust building can be explained by the combined effect of the four public relations variables and p-value of 0.000 confirmed the overall significance of the model, reinforcing the importance of these public relations factors in shaping public perceptions of EMS in Ghana. Among the predictors, crisis communication strategies emerged as the strongest determinant of public trust, demonstrating that transparent, prompt, and empathetic communication during emergencies is central to building and sustaining credibility. Internal communication also showed a positive and statistically significant relationship, emphasizing that effective coordination and collaboration among staff enhance consistency and service delivery, which indirectly fosters public confidence. Similarly, community relations initiatives significantly contributed to trust building, underscoring that outreach activities, education campaigns, and community involvement strengthen the relational bond between NAS and citizens. Finally, brand awareness and visibility had a substantial positive influence, revealing that consistent visibility through branding, public campaigns, and media presence boosts recognition and trust in EMS.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronyms	Full Meaning
AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
CERC	Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
NAS	National Ambulance Service
PR	Public Relations
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In the realm of healthcare delivery, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) represent a frontline resource for life-saving interventions (Roud & Gausdal, 2019). However, the effectiveness of EMS is significantly influenced by the degree of public trust. In this context, Public Relations (PR) serves not merely as a communication tool but as a strategic function for building and sustaining this trust (Cui et al., 2024). As crises often involve heightened uncertainty and emotional vulnerability, transparent and consistent communication through PR becomes critical (Johnston et al., 2020).

Public trust in EMS is anchored on perceived competence, transparency, accountability, and ethical standards. According to Cui et al. (2024), perceived public efficacy in emergency infrastructure closely linked to EMS depends significantly on communication clarity and institutional transparency, both domains of PR (Cui et al., 2024). Similarly, Apriliani et al. (2024) stress the vital role of crisis communication in establishing public resilience during health emergencies (Kim et al., 2021). The Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model underscores the role of PR in disseminating reliable, empathetic, and time-sensitive information (Kim et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2024; Johnston et al., 2020). Research by Johnston et al. (2020) indicates that the public's interpretation of EMS response is often shaped more by media narratives and institutional communication than by actual performance metrics (Johnston et al., 2020). This highlights the mediating role of PR in framing public perception (Miller et al., 2024). Additionally,

Miller et al. (2024) argue that transparent messaging by EMS agencies enhances organizational legitimacy and fosters civic confidence (Miller et al., 2024).

Moreover, Park et al. (2022) empirically validate that organizational communication strategies during emergencies significantly impact citizen compliance and trust (Lim et al., 2022). Lee et al. (2021) frames trust-building in EMS as a relational dynamic, sustained through interactive PR strategies like community engagement and participatory feedback mechanisms (Lee et al., 2021). Lim and Park (2023) reported gaps between public perception and EMS functionality, indicating a clear need for PR to bridge informational asymmetries. Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2020) advocated for integrating PR theory into EMS planning to better align community expectations with operational capacity. PR's role, thus, is both preventative and reactive, managing reputation before, during, and after public health events.

The literature further identifies performance transparency as a driver of trust (Kim et al., 2021). Ahn et al. (2023) argued that publicized performance metrics and open communication with EMS partners build accountability. Moreover, effective EMS-PR practices involve tailoring messages to cultural, geographic, and social contexts, as supported by Rungratmaneeemas and Lorsuwannarat (2021). Public relations is indispensable for enhancing public trust in EMS through transparent communication, community engagement, and crisis responsiveness. The integration of PR into EMS not only improves service utilization but also strengthens the legitimacy and support for emergency interventions.

In Ghana, the role of Public Relations (PR) within Emergency Medical Services (EMS), particularly the National Ambulance Service (NAS), has been severely underdeveloped in both academic discourse and practice (Haruna et al., 2022). PR interventions by NAS such as ad hoc radio interviews or celebrating National Ambulance Day remain fragmented, reactive, and

uncoordinated (Yevo et al., 2023). These episodic efforts fall short of the strategic communication models recommended in global EMS frameworks. Critically, there is no existing PR framework, defined communication goals, or evaluation mechanism to assess public trust and perceptions of NAS in Ghana (Daniels & Abuosi, 2020).

The consequences are significant: the Ghanaian public often perceives EMS as an unreliable, emergency-only utility rather than a trust-based health partner (Mahama et al., 2018)). As the nation grapples with a rising population, growing urbanization, increasing road traffic accidents, and climate-related emergencies, public trust in EMS has become a vital factor for effective healthcare delivery (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019). Studies show that trust drives service utilization and emergency response cooperation (Delaney et al., 2025; Zakariah et al., 2024). Yet, little is known about how structured PR efforts might reshape public opinion and increase trust in NAS, especially amidst Ghana's cultural, infrastructural, and informational challenges (Golo, 2023). This study emerges in response to this critical gap (Mensah, 2018). It will examine NAS's current PR strategies and evaluate their alignment with trust-building principles such as transparency, engagement, and responsiveness. By employing a Ghana-specific lens, the research will recommend culturally responsive and evidence-driven PR strategies that can reframe NAS from a passive service provider to a publicly trusted health partner.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite notable improvements in operational infrastructure, the National Ambulance Service (NAS) of Ghana continues to face a persistent crisis of public trust, especially within rural, peri-urban, and low-income communities (Bhattarai et al., 2023; Daniels & Abuosi, 2020; Zakariah et al., 2024). Citizens frequently cite response delays, inadequate communication, and unclear access procedures as critical impediments to utilizing EMS services. This mistrust leads many to rely on

informal and often unsafe transportation during emergencies, exacerbating health risks and preventable deaths (Zakariah et al., 2024). Reports of poor engagement and lack of consistent community education have highlighted NAS's failure to integrate relational trust-building measures into its operations (Zakariah et al., 2024).

While EMS systems globally have incorporated Public Relations (PR) strategies to improve trust, perception, and health behavior, in Ghana, PR within EMS remains underutilized and undocumented (Afrifa, 2020; Harding, 2019). Current outreach practices, such as sporadic radio interviews and annual awareness events, are reactive, disconnected, and lack continuity. More importantly, there is no national communication strategy, no institutional PR framework, and no formal assessments of public attitudes toward NAS (Liu et al., 2017). This vacuum reveals a significant knowledge and practice gap.

Existing literature in Ghana on EMS focuses largely on structural and clinical challenges such as funding, workforce, or logistics (Bhusal et al., 2023; Ankomah et al., 2024) but very few works explore the socio-psychological dimension of public trust and the strategic use of PR to shape it. Moreover, no empirical models currently assess the efficacy of PR techniques in Ghana's EMS environment, leaving questions about what kinds of communication work, for whom, and under what conditions (Alhazoober et al., 2024; Conduah & Ofoe, 2025).

Given Ghana's rapid urbanization, climate-related disaster vulnerability, and growing burden of road traffic injuries, the urgency to build public trust in EMS is both a public health and a policy imperative (Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2025; Salifu et al., 2025). Yet trust-building in this context is complicated by Ghana's cultural diversity, regional communication barriers, and digital divide. This suggests that PR strategies cannot be copy-pasted from Western models but must be contextually tailored (Alhazoober et al., 2024; Conduah & Ofoe, 2025; Armstrong-Mensah et al.,

2025; Salifu et al., 2025). This study, therefore, addresses a critical scholarly and social gap by investigating how public relations can influence public trust in the National Ambulance Service. It aims to evaluate NAS's current communication practices, assess public perception, and propose a culturally relevant, evidence-based PR framework. The findings will contribute to health communication literature, provide policy recommendations for Ghana's Ministry of Health, and improve the NAS's public legitimacy.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to critically examine the role of public relations (PR) in building and sustaining public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, with a particular focus on the National Ambulance Service (NAS). It investigates how NAS employs communication strategies to influence public perception, assess gaps in current PR practices, and evaluate their effectiveness in fostering confidence and encouraging the use of ambulance services. The research moves beyond viewing PR solely as a tool for image management, instead positioning it as a strategic public health instrument that can enhance community trust, ensure service transparency, and promote institutional accountability.

The study targets diverse population segments urban, peri-urban, and rural communities to explore how factors such as socio-economic status, education levels, and geographic access shape public trust in EMS. By capturing these variations, the research seeks to identify context-specific challenges and opportunities for effective PR engagement within the Ghanaian healthcare landscape. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the development of a culturally grounded, evidence-based PR framework for NAS, with potential applicability to similar public health systems in other low- and middle-income countries. In doing so, the study fills a significant gap in the existing literature on health communication in sub-Saharan Africa, where the relationship

between PR and public trust in EMS remains underexplored. The research aspires to support both academic inquiry and policy development, offering practical recommendations for institutionalizing PR as a foundational pillar of trust-building in emergency health services.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objective is to examine the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, using the National Ambulance Service (NAS) as a case study.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To assess how crisis communication strategies used by EMS influence public trust during emergencies.
- ii. To examine the role of employee relations in shaping the internal communication culture and its effect on public trust.
- iii. To evaluate the impact of community relations initiatives on public engagement and trust in EMS, especially in underserved areas.
- iv. To analyze how brand awareness and visibility influence public utilization and trust in EMS services.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. How do crisis communication practices of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) impact public perception and trust during emergency situations in Ghana?
- ii. In what ways do employee relations within NAS affect the organization's credibility and public trust in EMS delivery?
- iii. How effective are NAS's community outreach and engagement strategies in fostering trust in urban, peri-urban, and rural communities?

- iv. What role does brand visibility and messaging play in shaping public awareness and trust in the National Ambulance Service as a health emergency provider?

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to make meaningful contributions across policy, theoretical, organizational, and academic domains. In the context of Ghana's healthcare system, the National Ambulance Service (NAS) serves as a crucial lifeline in emergency response. Yet, public mistrust, misconceptions, and inadequate engagement have limited its impact. By focusing on the role of public relations (PR) in building and sustaining public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), this study addresses a vital but underexplored dimension of healthcare delivery in Ghana.

From a policy perspective, the findings are expected to inform national strategies for health communication, particularly in the area of emergency preparedness. Ghana's Ministry of Health and allied stakeholders could use the insights to institutionalize communication standards, PR protocols, and trust-building mechanisms within EMS frameworks. The study could also support the design of inclusive, community-driven outreach programs that improve service uptake and reduce reliance on informal emergency transport systems.

Theoretically, the research contributes to expanding the application of PR theories such as the Excellence Theory, Situational Crisis Communication Theory, and Relationship Management Theory within the sub-Saharan African EMS context. By situating PR as a trust-building mechanism rather than just a media-facing tool, the study bridges the gap between communication theory and public health realities in developing nations.

At the organizational level, the research will help the NAS evaluate its current communication strategies and understand how different PR dimensions crisis communication, employee relations,

community outreach, and brand management impact public trust. This can guide internal reforms, staff training, and external engagement.

For academia, this study fills a critical void by offering empirical data and analysis on a topic scarcely covered in Ghanaian or African public health scholarship. It opens avenues for future research in health communication, trust, and emergency service delivery in low- and middle-income countries, thereby enriching both local and global academic discourse.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study focuses on examining how public relations (PR) strategies influence public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, specifically through a case study of the National Ambulance Service (NAS). It explores key PR components crisis communication, employee relations, community engagement, and brand awareness and their impact on public perception, trust-building, and service utilization. The study covers a cross-section of urban, peri-urban, and rural communities in Ghana to understand how socio-economic and geographic differences shape public attitudes toward NAS. Data will be collected from NAS officials, EMS personnel, and members of the public to gain a comprehensive view of internal practices and external perceptions.

However, the study is delimited to the National Ambulance Service and does not extend to other healthcare providers or emergency response organizations in Ghana. It focuses on non-clinical communication practices rather than medical operations or patient outcomes. Furthermore, while national in relevance, logistical constraints may limit primary data collection to selected regions. The study does not aim to evaluate EMS infrastructure, funding, or logistics, but rather the strategic communication processes that foster or hinder public trust. Its findings are intended to inform PR practices within NAS and similar EMS institutions across low- and middle-income contexts.

1.4 Definition of Terms

Public Relations (PR) is a process of strategic communication that builds and manages mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their target audiences. In this study, PR means the National Ambulance Service's planned communication efforts in shaping public perception, managing its reputation, and creating public trust.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) also refers to a system coordinated to supply urgent medical care to victims of acute illnesses or injuries outside the hospital setting. This consists of administering ambulance services, timely paramedical care, and transport to the nearest medical institution.

Public trust refers to a public institution's competence, transparency, responsiveness, and intentions toward the individuals and communities it serves to the degree that they allow individuals and communities to have confidence in that institution. It refers to the public's trust that the National Ambulance Service is reliable and trustworthy.

National Ambulance Service (NAS) is the main government agency under the Ministry of Health that delivers emergency pre-hospital medical care throughout Ghana. This study analyzes the NAS's communication practices.

Stakeholders concerns all individuals or groups who have some vested interest in or who are otherwise affected by the NAS's operations. It includes patients, community members, EMS personnel, community leaders, policymakers, media, and civil society organizations.

1.9 Organization of the study

The research was divided into five chapters, with each chapter focusing on a unique part of the study process. Chapter One comprises the study's introduction, detailing the research problem, aims, research questions, as well as the importance and extent of the investigation. Chapter Two emphasizes an extensive literature review, encompassing pertinent definitions, concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical research conducted by other researchers. Chapter Three addresses the research methodology, encompassing the study site, target demographic, sampling techniques, sample size, questionnaire formulation, data gathering methods, data sources, analytical approaches, and the reliability and validity of the utilized instruments. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the data along with a discussion of the results. In conclusion, Chapter Five will offer a synthesis of the research overview, encompassing findings and suggestions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature in relation to the to the concept of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS). It also looks at theories, empirical review and hypothesis development based on the conceptual framework underpinning the study.

2.2 Concept of Public Relations

Public relations (PR) has evolved significantly in recent decades, transitioning from a basic communication tool to a strategic management function central to organizational success. At its core, public relations involves the deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding and beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics (Johnston et al., 2020). Contemporary scholars underscore PR's multidimensional nature, where it serves as a bridge for communication, reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and societal value alignment (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Park et al., 2022).

Empirical studies reflect the shift in PR practice from one-way communication to dialogic engagement. Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory is foundational in redefining public relations as a two-way, symmetrical model grounded in openness, mutuality, and responsiveness (Kim et al., 2021). Building upon this, Cui et al. (2024) stress that PR has become increasingly reliant on emotional intelligence and stakeholder psychology, especially in digital and cross-cultural contexts. The shift is evident in how institutions use PR not just to inform, but to foster trust, inclusivity, and shared narratives.

Strategically, PR also contributes to organizational resilience. According to Rungratmaneemas and Lorsuwannarat (2021), effective PR enhances crisis communication, allowing organizations to mitigate risks, preserve reputation, and recover from setbacks more swiftly. Miller et al. (2024) adds that stakeholder mapping and media framing are now essential components, with PR specialists acting as both communicators and cultural interpreters. This reinforces the idea that public relations is not peripheral, but a central function tied to leadership, ethics, and sustainability. Globally, empirical work has demonstrated how PR adapts across sectors and cultures. Apriliani et al. (2024) found that in Indonesia, public sector institutions use PR to improve transparency and civic engagement, aligning closely with governance reforms.

Similarly, in the African context, studies by Yevo et al. (2023), Zakariah et al. (2024), and Golo (2023) show that PR functions in government and NGOs are increasingly employed to address public health crises, electoral transparency, and citizen mobilization. In Ghana, Daniels and Abuosi (2020) highlight how PR is instrumental in managing public perceptions of health reforms and vaccination campaigns.

Digital transformation has further amplified the scope of PR. Lim et al. (2022) note the pivotal role of social media in real-time image repair, influencer engagement, and proactive content dissemination. Ahn et al. (2023) emphasize algorithmic communication in PR, revealing how data analytics and artificial intelligence now shape campaign design and public sentiment analysis. Liu et al. (2017) and Bhattarai et al. (2023) support this with findings that AI-enhanced PR tools have increased message personalization and campaign precision.

Moreover, trust and ethics remain central. According to Salifu et al. (2025) and Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2025), public trust is deeply influenced by the transparency, credibility, and responsiveness embedded in PR strategies. In educational institutions, Alhazoober et al. (2024) and Conduah &

Ofoe (2025) found that PR influences enrolment, reputation, and alumni relations by shaping stakeholder perceptions. Public relations has transcended its early role as a publicity mechanism to become a strategic communication discipline rooted in dialogue, trust-building, crisis response, and societal relevance. The empirical evidence supports a holistic view that positions PR as vital to sustainable development, institutional legitimacy, and democratic governance.

2.2.1 Crisis communication strategies

Crisis communication strategies in public relations (PR) are essential tools that organizations deploy to protect and rebuild reputation, manage public perception, and maintain stakeholder trust during unexpected adverse events. These strategies are guided by principles of timeliness, transparency, empathy, and responsibility. According to Roud and Gausdal (2019), the effectiveness of crisis communication is rooted in strategic foresight, relationship management, and trust-building, all of which enable institutions to sustain credibility under scrutiny.

Empirical studies show that different crises, whether reputational, financial, or operational, require varied responses. Cui et al. (2024) and Kim et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of message framing and emotional tone, asserting that the adoption of accommodative strategies (e.g., apology, compensation) over defensive ones (e.g., denial, shifting blame) yields higher public approval. Similarly, Johnston et al. (2020) highlight the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which aligns response strategies with the organization's perceived responsibility in the crisis, to ensure message appropriateness and effectiveness.

Apriliani et al. (2024) underscore the role of digital platforms in crisis messaging, revealing how real-time communication through social media enhances responsiveness and mitigates misinformation. However, Lim et al. (2022) and Park et al. (2022) caution that such platforms also amplify public backlash if messages are perceived as insincere or delayed. The cultural and

contextual dimensions of crisis responses are also key. Ahn et al. (2023) and Rungratmaneeemas and Lorsuwannarat (2021) found that cultural congruence in crisis messages particularly in collectivist societies influences public receptivity and loyalty post-crisis.

In Ghanaian and broader African contexts, Daniels and Abuosi (2020), Yevoo et al. (2023), and Zakariah et al. (2024) document how poor stakeholder engagement, misinformation, and lack of transparency undermine public trust during health crises. Afrifa (2020) and Mahama et al. (2018) advocate for community-integrated approaches and multilingual communication to reach diverse audiences effectively. Bhusal et al. (2023) and Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2025) further recommend proactive reputation management and continuous communication training for PR personnel. Effective crisis communication in public relations blends theoretical grounding, empirical insight, cultural sensitivity, and digital agility. It is no longer just about controlling narratives but about sustaining relationships and fostering resilience before, during, and after a crisis.

2.2.2 Employee Relations in Shaping Internal Communication

Employee relations are foundational to shaping internal communication, particularly within the public relations (PR) function of organizations. Modern scholarship underscores that effective internal communication is no longer transactional but strategic an essential element of employee engagement, organizational identity, and public reputation (Kim et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2024). As such, employee relations influence the tone, transparency, and responsiveness of communication within institutions.

Roud and Gausdal (2019) highlight that strong employee relations cultivate trust and shared values, which are prerequisites for two-way symmetrical communication an ideal model in public relations that emphasizes dialogue over dissemination. Empirical findings from Lim et al. (2022) and Park et al. (2022) confirm that fostering mutual understanding through internal communication

leads to more cohesive and supportive organizational cultures, especially in turbulent or crisis-prone sectors.

Johnston et al. (2020) observe that organizations practicing participatory internal communication where employee voices are included in strategic decisions report higher levels of internal reputation and lower turnover rates. Similarly, Ahn et al. (2023) argue that internal public relations should prioritize relational outcomes such as commitment and satisfaction, which are shaped by the quality of employee-management communication.

The empirical studies of Lee et al. (2021) and Rungratmaneemas and Lorsuwannarat (2021) in public sector organizations demonstrate that employee relations act as a mediating force between leadership communication styles and internal legitimacy. This is particularly important in the public relations space, where internal stakeholders increasingly double as external brand ambassadors (Yevo et al., 2023; Daniels & Abuosi, 2020).

Apriliani et al. (2024) and Mahama et al. (2018) also provide evidence that culturally attuned and inclusive internal communication boosts trust, organizational learning, and adaptability. In this context, the internal PR function must bridge communication across departments while championing employee concerns. Delaney et al. (2025) and Zakariah et al. (2024) emphasize that meaningful internal relations extend beyond HR procedures; they shape identity and organizational storytelling. Employee relations are not peripheral but central to internal communication's success in public relations. They influence how messages are created, shared, and received, ultimately shaping how employees perceive their roles and represent the organization to external publics.

2.2.3 Community Relations Initiatives

Community relations, a vital branch of public relations (PR), encompasses strategic initiatives aimed at fostering positive, long-term relationships between organizations and the communities they operate in. Empirical literature supports the view that community relations are not merely peripheral activities but central to the legitimacy, trust, and sustainability of organizations (Johnston et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021). These initiatives have evolved beyond philanthropy into integrated, participatory frameworks that empower communities and reflect organizational values. According to Cui et al. (2024), effective community relations rely on consistent engagement and transparency, enhancing organizational reputation and social capital. Roud and Gausdal (2019) emphasize trust-building as a core function, especially in environments where corporate actions directly impact local populations. For example, participatory dialogue and needs-based development projects have proven to reinforce social bonds and reduce organizational risk. This aligns with Daniels and Abuosi (2020), who documented how health sector organizations in Ghana used community-driven campaigns to address misinformation and increase service uptake.

Apriliani et al. (2024) underscore the strategic use of localized messaging in community relations, demonstrating that cultural and linguistic contextualization enhances message resonance. Similarly, Miller et al. (2024) found that youth-targeted community campaigns improved engagement with marginalized populations, especially when co-created with local leaders. Ahn et al. (2023) extend this by suggesting that social media and digital tools can amplify community voices and increase organizational accountability.

Rungratmanemas and Lorsuwannarat (2021) highlight the role of relational governance in fostering shared values between corporations and communities. Moreover, studies by Yevo et al. (2023) and Mahama et al. (2018) show that proactive community relations lead to mutual benefits,

such as reduced conflict, higher compliance with public policies, and greater brand loyalty. These empirical findings are reinforced by Lim et al. (2022) and Bhattarai et al. (2023), who confirm that inclusive initiatives increase public trust and organizational resilience in crisis contexts.

In sum, the literature affirms that community relations initiatives, when embedded within a strategic PR framework, enhance both social impact and corporate performance. The shift from transactional to transformational engagement marks a critical advancement in how organizations co-exist with and contribute to their communities.

2.2.4 Brand Awareness and Visibility

Brand awareness and visibility are pivotal components of effective public relations (PR), playing a central role in shaping public perception and competitive positioning. According to Kim et al. (2021), brand awareness refers to the degree to which a target audience recognizes and recalls a brand, while visibility relates to how frequently and prominently the brand appears in public discourse and media. In contemporary PR practice, organizations leverage media relations, strategic storytelling, and digital engagement to enhance both awareness and visibility, often with measurable outcomes.

Empirical studies affirm the interdependence of brand visibility and public engagement. For instance, Cui et al. (2024) demonstrated that increased brand visibility through sustained media exposure leads to higher trust and emotional connection with consumers, while Johnston et al. (2020) emphasized that such visibility positively impacts stakeholders' perceptions of legitimacy and reliability. In a similar context, Park et al. (2022) found that visibility, particularly through social media, boosts customer retention and strengthens brand equity.

Public relations functions as the strategic bridge connecting organizations to their audiences. Miller et al. (2024) stress that PR campaigns designed to generate media coverage, organize events, and initiate influencer partnerships significantly elevate brand recall and loyalty. Similarly, Ahn et al. (2023) reported that visibility achieved through culturally resonant messaging and community-driven narratives improves brand relevance and market penetration.

Further evidence from African contexts, such as Mahama et al. (2018) and Daniels & Abuosi (2020), highlights how PR-driven brand awareness campaigns can transform perceptions in sectors like health and education, often resulting in increased public engagement and service uptake. Zakariah et al. (2024) and Haruna et al. (2022) also argue that in resource-constrained environments, the strategic use of PR to create brand familiarity enhances institutional credibility and fosters stakeholder support.

Moreover, Roud and Gausdal (2019) assert that brand visibility is not merely about presence but about strategic resonance, meaning visibility efforts must align with brand identity and audience values. In line with this, Apriliani et al. (2024) and Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2025) conclude that public relations must employ both traditional and digital tools to maximize visibility, with consistent messaging being crucial to building a strong brand image.

2.3 Public Trust in Medical Services (EMS)

Public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is fundamental to the effective delivery of prehospital and urgent care, particularly in crises where timely response and public compliance are vital. Trust in EMS is not merely a function of technical competence or infrastructure; it is deeply shaped by the public's perception of transparency, communication, and ethical conduct, all of which fall within the realm of public relations (Cui et al., 2024; Roud & Gausdal, 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that strategic communication and public relations (PR) activities play a pivotal role in building and maintaining this trust. Roud and Gausdal (2019) underscore that trust in public institutions, including EMS, hinges on relational capital: transparency, reliability, and engagement. Similarly, Johnston et al. (2020) stress that two-way symmetrical communication, where agencies not only disseminate but also listen and respond to public concerns, is key to nurturing trust.

Public relations efforts in EMS, such as community outreach, media briefings, and stakeholder engagement, serve as tools to manage reputation and respond to crises. Park et al. (2022) highlight that in South Korea, well-coordinated PR responses during health emergencies helped mitigate fear and increased public compliance with EMS protocols. This aligns with Kim et al. (2021), who demonstrate that perceived responsiveness and openness from EMS personnel significantly improve public willingness to seek emergency care, especially among marginalized populations. Ahn et al. (2023) further show that communication breakdowns, whether due to misinformation, delayed response, or inconsistent messaging, erode public trust and delay the decision to call EMS, especially in pandemic contexts. Miller et al. (2024) add that proactive crisis communication fosters resilience and trust even before an emergency arises, emphasizing preparedness over reaction. In Ghana, Daniels and Abuosi (2020) and Zakariah et al. (2024) provide evidence that trust deficits in the EMS system are often linked to poor public engagement strategies, rather than service quality alone.

Additionally, Apriliani et al. (2024) and Rungratmaneemas & Lorsuwannarat (2021) underscore the cultural dimensions of public trust, noting that EMS providers must tailor PR strategies to local contexts. In multicultural or rural settings, a lack of culturally sensitive messaging can reinforce mistrust or lead to misunderstandings, particularly regarding the role and purpose of EMS. Trust

is also fragile in the face of historical grievances or systemic inequities. For instance, Haruna et al. (2022) and Yevo et al. (2023) emphasize that negative past interactions with EMS personnel or other healthcare workers can significantly dampen the effectiveness of PR efforts, unless these are intentionally designed to address such concerns through reconciliation and reform-oriented messaging.

In light of this, Bhattarai et al. (2023) argue for institutionalizing public relations as a formal operational component of EMS, not merely for promotional purposes but as a strategic mechanism for public accountability. Lim et al. (2022) support this by showing that integrating feedback mechanisms into EMS operations such as hotlines, community forums, or digital surveys enhances perceptions of responsiveness and inclusion.

Ultimately, the relationship between public trust and EMS efficacy is symbiotic and mediated by communication. As Liu et al. (2017) and Salifu et al. (2025) note, public trust not only improves EMS uptake but also leads to better health outcomes through timely interventions. Therefore, investing in ethical, transparent, and culturally attuned public relations is not optional; it is essential for the legitimacy and success of emergency medical systems.

2.4 Theoretical Review

This study applies Relationship Management Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to examine how public relations practices influence public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

2.4.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by Coombs (2007), offers a strategic framework for understanding how organizations like Emergency Medical Services (EMS) can communicate effectively during crises to maintain or restore public trust. According to

SCCT, the credibility of EMS depends not only on service delivery but also on how transparently and empathetically they communicate with the public in high-risk or emergency scenarios (Kim et al., 2021).

In the context of EMS, public trust is often tested during health emergencies, accidents, or disease outbreaks. When EMS authorities adopt clear, timely, and audience-specific communication, they can mitigate misinformation and fear, reinforcing trust and cooperation (Cui et al., 2024). SCCT emphasizes that the public's perception of EMS credibility is influenced by how well the service takes responsibility, communicates corrective actions, and reassures citizens (Miller et al., 2024). Moreover, SCCT classifies crises based on the degree of organizational responsibility, victim, accidental, or preventable and prescribes tailored communication responses accordingly. For instance, when EMS is not directly at fault (e.g., a natural disaster), strategies should focus on instructing information and empathy to maintain trust (Lim et al., 2022). When public dissatisfaction arises due to delays or errors, apology and corrective action messaging are crucial to rebuilding legitimacy (Roud & Gausdal, 2019). Empirical studies support SCCT's relevance in EMS, showing that crisis communication grounded in accountability and openness enhances public cooperation and long-term trust (Johnston et al., 2020; Park et al., 2022). Thus, SCCT provides a critical theoretical lens for examining how public relations strategies can influence public perceptions and trust in EMS during crises.

2.4.2 Relationship Management Theory (RMT)

Relationship Management Theory (RMT), introduced by Ledingham and Bruning (2000), positions public relations as a strategic function centered on the establishment, maintenance, and enhancement of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. In the

context of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), this theory is critical for understanding how public trust can be developed and sustained through proactive communication and engagement.

Public trust in EMS is not solely derived from technical competence but is significantly influenced by the quality of the relationship between EMS providers and the communities they serve (Cui et al., 2024). According to Daniels and Abuosi (2020), regular, transparent communication and empathy-driven messaging foster trust and public confidence in emergency services, especially in regions where access and reliability have historically been challenged. EMS agencies that consistently communicate their mission, listen to public concerns, and respond appropriately are more likely to earn long-term trust (Roud & Gausdal, 2019).

Moreover, relational dimensions such as openness, commitment, competence, and trustworthiness are essential pillars of the EMS-public relationship. Johnston et al. (2020) highlights that when EMS providers actively engage communities through outreach programs and public education, it strengthens relational bonds and reinforces perceptions of care and reliability. Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2025) also show that trust improves dramatically when EMS incorporates community feedback into service delivery, illustrating the two-way communication essential to RMT.

In high-stress environments like emergency healthcare, where fear and urgency dominate, trust becomes the currency of cooperation. Ahn et al. (2023) found that patients are more likely to comply with EMS instructions and seek timely assistance when they perceive the EMS as approachable and respectful. These relational benefits are not incidental but stem from intentional public relations strategies designed to maintain community connection. Thus, RMT provides a strong theoretical lens for understanding how EMS can proactively manage perceptions, build trust, and enhance public responsiveness through consistent and strategic public relations efforts.

2.4.3 Application of Theory to the Study

This study applies Relationship Management Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to examine how public relations practices influence public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Relationship Management Theory provides a foundation for understanding how sustained, two-way communication builds trust between EMS and the public. Through initiatives such as community outreach, transparent reporting, and culturally relevant education, EMS can foster trust by demonstrating commitment, empathy, and accountability (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Johnston et al., 2020; Daniels & Abuosi, 2020).

In the context of New Juaben North Municipality, where public trust in EMS is challenged by perceptions of inefficiency and delayed responses (Zakariah et al., 2024), the theory supports a communication-centered approach to bridge the gap between public expectations and service realities. EMS units that engage with communities beyond crisis situations, such as through health talks and participatory planning, build stronger relational ties (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019; Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2025).

SCCT is equally relevant, particularly during public health emergencies. The theory emphasizes that public perception is shaped by how well EMS communicates during crises. Inaccurate or delayed messaging can cause distrust, while clear, empathetic, and consistent communication enhances credibility (Cui et al., 2024; Lim et al., 2022). For instance, during disease outbreaks or disasters, EMS must use strategic PR tools to provide real-time updates, acknowledge public concerns, and outline corrective actions where needed (Miller et al., 2024; Park et al., 2022).

Both theories support the view that trust is not built solely through service delivery, but through communication strategies that humanize EMS personnel, engage the public meaningfully, and demonstrate institutional transparency (Haruna et al., 2022; Yevo et al., 2023). These theoretical

lenses guide the study in assessing how PR practices directly influence public trust and EMS effectiveness in the region.

2.5 Empirical Review

Bamidele et al. (2025) investigate the role of public relations in enhancing the effectiveness of healthcare service delivery, with a focus on its influence on patient engagement, crisis communication, and institutional credibility. In the evolving landscape of healthcare, where public trust, compliance with regulations, and public perception are critical to organizational success, public relations functions as a vital communication channel between healthcare providers and the communities they serve. It plays a central role in promoting transparency, shaping institutional reputation, and ensuring the consistent flow of accurate information. The study highlights how public relations contributes significantly to patient communication and engagement by fostering clear, honest, and timely communication between healthcare institutions and patients. Through public education campaigns, PR enhances health literacy and promotes preventive healthcare behaviors, enabling patients to make informed decisions about their well-being. Moreover, PR strategies help demystify medical processes and procedures, thereby increasing patient confidence and satisfaction.

Ward (2017) argues that “public trust” is foundational to the development and maintenance of health and wellbeing at the individual, community, and societal levels. The paper emphasizes that if public health practitioners and policymakers aim to improve health outcomes and foster meaningful engagement between the public and health systems, then trust must be treated as a strategic priority. Public health efforts ranging from health promotion to disease prevention rely not only on access and availability but also on the willingness of individuals to engage, which is strongly influenced by their trust in the practitioners and the services being offered. Ward further

explores the theory of trust from a sociological perspective, highlighting its relevance for understanding human behavior in public health contexts. This theoretical lens sheds light on why trust is not simply a desirable attribute but a prerequisite for public health effectiveness. Without trust, individuals may resist services, question motives, or disengage from health systems altogether.

Khankeh et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review to explore how social trust is built in various contexts and to identify the key factors influencing trust in disaster risk management. Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model, the authors systematically searched the PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science databases in August 2021. Their search focused on English-language studies related to social trust and disaster relief efforts. Articles were excluded if they were not original research or if full-text access was unavailable. From an initial pool of 1,359 articles, only 17 met the inclusion criteria and were selected for final analysis. The findings of these studies were synthesized into four broad thematic areas. Several studies emphasized the critical role of local governments in trust-building during disasters, highlighting their capacity to act as frontline institutions in coordinating response and maintaining public confidence. Another group of studies explored the influence of social media, showing how digital platforms serve as key tools for disseminating information, shaping narratives, and engaging with communities in ways that can foster or hinder trust. Additional research focused on the role of social capital, indicating that strong interpersonal networks and community bonds significantly enhance trust during emergencies. Finally, the review underscored the importance of community participation, where inclusive engagement and local involvement in decision-making processes were seen as essential to strengthening trust between the public and institutions in disaster contexts.

Majid et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review and thematic analysis to explore the role of public trust in shaping the acceptance and sustained practice of public health recommendations during major global outbreaks. Drawing on 41 studies from the twenty-first century, the review focused on understanding how trust in governments, healthcare providers, and the media influenced public adherence to health behaviours aimed at controlling the spread of infectious diseases. The findings revealed a notable inconsistency in levels of trust toward government institutions and media outlets across different countries. In contrast, trust in healthcare providers was generally high, although a few exceptions were observed in specific contexts. The review also highlighted several unintended consequences that arose in situations where public trust was lacking. Mistrust often led individuals to resist compliance with recommended health measures, turn to alternative information sources, and express reluctance toward vaccines. These behavioural responses undermined efforts to manage public health crises effectively. The study emphasized that trust plays a critical role not only in encouraging individuals to adopt protective behaviours but also in sustaining these behaviours over time. In closing, the authors underscored the far-reaching implications of mistrust particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic arguing that once trust is eroded, it can have lasting effects on public cooperation and the overall success of public health interventions.

Apriliani et al. (2024) sought to examine the public relations strategies employed by the Sleman Regency Government to foster public trust during the 2020–2021 Mount Merapi eruption crisis. Using a qualitative, descriptive case study approach, the research drew on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including the Sleman Government’s Public Relations Office, the Umbulharjo Monitoring Merapi Community (UMMC), and the regional disaster management agency (BPBD) of Sleman. The study reveals that the government’s public relations unit played a central role in

disaster communication, striving to integrate trust-building components into its communication practices. Findings indicated that the Sleman Regency Government's Public Relations team maintained a consistent commitment to the community, particularly those in high-risk disaster areas. Their communication approach was marked by openness, transparency, and a demonstrated concern for public safety, which included making information widely accessible and ensuring that communication channels remained open throughout the crisis. The team also strategically identified credible communicators, such as the BPBD and the Regent, and engaged community leaders in the dissemination and monitoring of information. This collaborative and integrated approach to communication significantly contributed to building public confidence.

Melki et al. (2021) investigated how trust in various sources of COVID-19 information such as television, social media, and interpersonal communication as well as specific informants like healthcare professionals, government officials, and religious clerics, influenced belief in COVID-19 myths and false information, along with individuals' practices of critically verifying content before posting on social media. The study utilized a cross-sectional, researcher-administered phone survey conducted among adults residing in Lebanon between March 27 and April 23, 2020. The sample was composed of 56.1% men and 43.9% women, with 37.9% holding a university degree, 63.0% aged over 30, and just 7% having received media literacy training. Findings revealed that individuals who expressed trust in COVID-19 news from social media and interpersonal communication, as well as those who trusted information disseminated by clerics, were significantly more likely to believe in COVID-19-related myths and misinformation. In contrast, participants with higher educational attainment, particularly university graduates, and those who trusted information from government sources, were less likely to believe such myths and misinformation. Importantly, belief in these myths was associated with a lower likelihood of

engaging in critical verification practices on social media before sharing content. This suggests that misinformation acceptance directly impacted individuals' tendency to evaluate the accuracy of information they encountered online. However, the study also found that media literacy training had a positive influence on promoting more critical and reflective online behavior. Individuals who had undergone such training were significantly more likely to engage in responsible and evaluative practices before posting content on social media.

Pak et al. (2021) investigate the role of public trust as a mediating factor in individuals' compliance with stringent government health policies, particularly in the context of varying political regimes. Drawing on data from two major sources the global behaviors and perceptions survey conducted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) the study applies linear regression models to estimate how both public trust and the strictness of government restrictions influence the level of public adherence to health guidelines. These models account for individual-level differences as well as daily fluctuations in the stringency of preventive measures at the country level. The study finds robust evidence that stricter government policies are associated with higher levels of compliance among the public. More importantly, the findings reveal that public trust significantly amplifies the effect of policy stringency on behavioral adherence. In other words, when trust in government is high and the public perceives the authorities to be truthful, the impact of restrictive measures on compliance effectively doubles. Furthermore, the research explores how these dynamics play out across different types of political regimes. The results indicate that in both authoritarian and democratic contexts, higher levels of public trust consistently led to greater compliance as policy stringency increases. This underscores the crucial role of institutional trust, not just as a background factor, but as a key variable that shapes how citizens respond to government directives, particularly during

public health crises. The study concludes that public trust is an indispensable component in enhancing the effectiveness of health policy measures, regardless of political context.

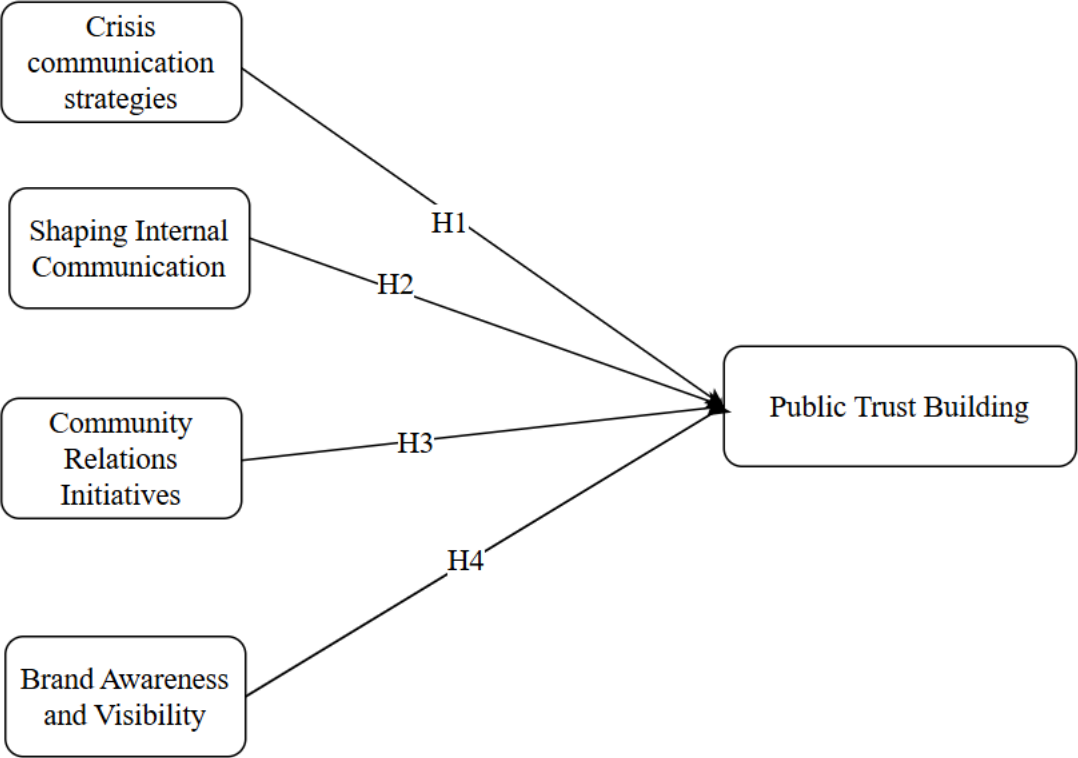
Al Hadeed et al. (2024) conducted a study examining media organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with a particular focus on how these organizations manage content in response to audience engagement. Employing a case study methodology, the researchers selected a sample of 280 individuals drawn from 12 media houses currently operating within the UAE. Through structural equation modeling (SEM), the findings demonstrated that media organizations place strong emphasis on both public relations practices and the adoption of new media technologies, with both factors showing statistically significant effects ($p < 0.000$). Importantly, the study found that these practices are strongly associated with the implementation of two-way communication strategies. This interactive form of communication plays a pivotal role in shaping how content is managed within these organizations. Two-way communication fosters a dynamic feedback loop where audience preferences, responses, and expectations inform the design, evaluation, and continuous adjustment of media content. As a result, the content produced becomes more aligned with the interests and preferences of the target audience. The researchers concluded that managing media content is a complex and strategic process, heavily influenced by the degree of interaction between media producers and their audiences. Public relations practices, particularly when integrated with two-way communication and new media tools, serve as critical enablers of effective content management. Ultimately, this integrated approach contributes to more audience-centered outcomes, reinforcing the importance of ongoing communication and feedback in modern media operations.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework informed by the works of Bamidele et al. (2025), Ward (2017), Khankeh et al. (2025), Majid et al. (2021), Apriliani et al. (2024), Melki et al. (2021), Pak et al. (2021), and Al Hadeed et al. (2024) explores how key public relations functions influence public building within the context of health and emergency services. Grounded in communication and organizational trust literature, the framework positions public trust building as the dependent variable, shaped by four critical independent variables: crisis communication strategies, internal communication processes, community relations initiatives, and brand awareness and visibility.

Public trust is conceptualized as a dynamic outcome shaped by how institutions manage communication under routine and crisis conditions. Crisis communication strategies, as noted by Ward (2017) and Khankeh et al. (2025), play a crucial role in maintaining institutional credibility during emergencies. When communication is transparent, timely, and empathetic, it mitigates panic and fosters confidence among the public. Simultaneously, shaping internal communication through organizational coherence and message alignment ensures consistency in outward-facing communications, which Majid et al. (2021) argue is essential to avoid public confusion and misinformation. Community relations initiatives also serve as powerful tools for trust cultivation. As Bamidele et al. (2025) and Apriliani et al. (2024) highlight, active engagement with local communities through participatory dialogue, feedback integration, and local partnerships reinforces perceptions of reliability and responsiveness. In parallel, brand awareness and visibility, particularly when leveraged through digital and traditional media, enhance the perceived legitimacy of an organization. Melki et al. (2021) and Pak et al. (2021) support the idea that public exposure to consistent branding and clear institutional values strengthens emotional and cognitive trust. Al Hadeed et al. (2024) further emphasize that the integration of two-way communication,

enabled by digital tools and strategic content management, amplifies these efforts. Ultimately, this conceptual framework posits that when public institutions effectively implement these communication strategies, they can meaningfully shape public perception and build enduring trust, especially in contexts marked by uncertainty and health-related risks.



Source: Researcher's own work (2025)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an outline of the various methods and strategies employed by the researcher to collect data, clean the data, and analyze the data using the appropriate analytical tools. It looks at the population and sampling size, research design, research instrument, validity, and research instrument, data analysis techniques, organizational profile, and chapter summary.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions of the Study.

The philosophical assumption underpinning this study is rooted in a pragmatic paradigm, which accommodates the complexity of real-world phenomena by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Pragmatism holds that reality is not entirely objective or subjective but can be best understood through practical inquiry that draws on multiple perspectives and methods (Gitau, 2024; Umar et al., 2025). This philosophical stance supports the study's adoption of a mixed-methods cross-sectional design to explore the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) (Odje, 2024).

Unlike purely positivist or interpretivist paradigms, pragmatism allows for the simultaneous use of empirical measurement and contextual interpretation, thereby enabling a more comprehensive exploration of the relationships between public relations strategies and trust in EMS. Quantitative data, gathered through structured surveys, allow for the measurement of associations between variables such as crisis communication, internal messaging, community outreach, and media visibility. Meanwhile, qualitative insights obtained through interviews or open-ended survey questions provide depth and context to these statistical patterns, revealing how citizens perceive and interpret EMS communication practices (Helmy & Silviana, 2024).

This approach acknowledges that trust is both measurable and socially constructed. As Mohamed (2024) argues, pragmatism emphasizes the importance of methodological flexibility and relevance to real-world application. By combining statistical analysis with interpretive exploration, the study captures not only the extent of trust but also the reasons behind it. Rauf (2024) supports this view, noting that a mixed-methods design is especially effective when studying institutional relationships shaped by communication, behavior, and public perception.

Within this cross-sectional framework, data are collected at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of how current public relations efforts influence public confidence in EMS. This design facilitates the identification of causal and correlational patterns, while also allowing for the thematic exploration of contextual factors that shape public trust (Chambers, 2024; Alaburo & Bolanle, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of methods ensures triangulation of findings, enhancing the study's reliability and validity. It acknowledges the complexity of public trust formation and recognizes the interplay between structural communication efforts and subjective audience experiences (Sofa & Paramitha, 2024; Vutumu et al., 2024). Public relations are thus treated as both operational strategies and communicative practices with tangible and perceived impacts on trust. By embracing the pragmatic paradigm through a mixed-methods cross-sectional design, the study offers evidence-based, nuanced insights that inform public policy, institutional reforms, and communication strategies in emergency healthcare systems. It ensures that findings are both empirically rigorous and contextually meaningful (Tajudeen, 2024; Kopan, 2024; Kuntadi, 2024; Panahi et al., 2024; Adam et al., 2025; Biloblovskyi et al., 2024).

3.3 Research Design

A research design serves as the overarching blueprint that guides how a study addresses its research questions, defines its methodology, and structures data collection and analysis. As noted by Mullens and Shen (2024), research designs may be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, or a blend of these, depending on the nature and objectives of the study. In the context of this research,, which explores the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) a mixed-methods cross-sectional design is adopted. This design is particularly well-suited for investigating complex, socially embedded phenomena by combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, while capturing data at a specific point in time.

The rationale for employing a mixed-methods cross-sectional design lies in its ability to deliver both breadth and depth. Quantitative methods will enable the statistical examination of relationships between key variables such as crisis communication, internal messaging, community engagement, media visibility, and the levels of public trust in EMS. This provides empirical evidence on whether and how these public relations strategies correlate with trust outcomes. At the same time, qualitative components such as in-depth interviews or open-ended survey responses will offer nuanced insights into individual perceptions, beliefs, and contextual factors that shape the trust-building process (Apriliani et al., 2024; Pak et al., 2021).

By collecting both types of data simultaneously within the same timeframe, the cross-sectional aspect of the design allows for a comprehensive snapshot of how public relations practices and public trust interact in the current operational context of EMS. It facilitates the identification of patterns and correlations without requiring longitudinal follow-up (Mullens & Shen, 2024). For example, the study may explore whether higher public exposure to transparent crisis communication is associated with increased confidence in EMS, or if active community

engagement initiatives align with elevated trust levels. Quantitative tools such as regression analysis will be employed to identify statistically significant relationships, while qualitative thematic analysis will be used to interpret subjective experiences and contextual dynamics (Thin & Lam, 2024). Overall, the mixed-methods cross-sectional design strengthens the study's validity and applicability, grounding theoretical assumptions in empirical evidence and real-world perspectives, and offering actionable insights for enhancing public trust through strategic public relations in EMS.

3.4 Research Approach

A research approach serves as a structured plan and methodology guiding the sequence of actions taken by researchers to address specific objectives (Obloberdievna & Nematjonovna, 2022). In exploring the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), a mixed-methods cross-sectional design is particularly appropriate due to its capacity to combine quantitative and qualitative data, providing both breadth and depth in understanding complex phenomena (Jafari, Pakmaram & Rezaie, 2024).

Trust in EMS is shaped by an intricate interplay of communication quality, public perception, and organizational credibility. A mixed-methods design facilitates the quantitative measurement of variables such as communication frequency, message clarity, responsiveness, and perceived trust, while also allowing for qualitative exploration of individuals' experiences and perceptions (Hussain et al., 2025). Quantitative components enable statistical hypothesis testing and objective analysis through tools like regression and correlation (Bahtiar, 2024), while qualitative elements such as interviews or focus groups offer rich, contextual insights into how public relations efforts are received and interpreted. This cross-sectional approach collects data at a specific point in time, capturing a snapshot of the current state of public trust in EMS and its relationship with various

public relations strategies, such as crisis communication, media visibility, internal messaging, and community engagement. As Muturi and Kariuki (2024) argue, integrating both numeric trends and narrative depth ensures a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Furthermore, qualitative insights help interpret and explain statistical trends, addressing why certain strategies succeed or fail in building trust. This is particularly valuable in public health contexts where cultural, emotional, and contextual factors play a pivotal role in shaping public sentiment (Muhereza, 2024). Studies have shown that combining qualitative perspectives with quantitative rigor leads to more nuanced, actionable findings that can guide EMS communication strategies and public engagement (Gideon & Chakamera, 2024). The mixed-methods cross-sectional design thus provides a comprehensive, empirically grounded framework for assessing how public relations practices influence trust in EMS. It supports the development of evidence-based recommendations for enhancing public confidence in emergency services while ensuring that both measurable outcomes and lived experiences are considered (Hussain et al., 2025).

3.5 Population and Sample Size

The population employed in the study focuses on the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. According to Galea et al. (2019), a population refers to the complete set of individuals, elements, or entities that are the focus of a scientific inquiry. In this context, the target population comprises both adult residents of urban and peri-urban communities in Greater Accra, as well as key personnel from the National Ambulance Service (NAS), who are directly involved in public communication, operations, and service delivery. As Enzenbach et al. (2019) emphasize, this population serves as the basis from which meaningful conclusions are drawn, and informed generalizations are made.

Given the extensive nature of EMS service delivery in Greater Accra, it is not feasible to collect data from every resident or NAS staff member. Therefore, a sampling frame was established, consisting of selected communities and departments within NAS. The study employed a cross-sectional, mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data were gathered from a stratified sample of adult residents to assess perceptions of public trust, exposure to EMS communication efforts, and awareness of EMS activities. Complementing this, qualitative insights were obtained through semi-structured interviews with NAS personnel, focusing on internal communication practices, institutional challenges, public relations strategies, and trust-building efforts. These qualitative interviews provided in-depth contextual understanding of how EMS communication is internally managed and externally perceived. In selecting participants, the study drew upon sample size calculation methods outlined by Singh and Masuku (2014), due to the absence of a complete database on the number of EMS communication officers and operational staff in the NAS. This methodological choice ensured that the study achieved a representative and manageable sample while accounting for practical field constraints. Sampling decisions were guided by methodological rigor to enhance the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the study's findings within the diverse socio-cultural setting of Greater Accra. The formula developed by Singh and Masuku (2014) is suitable to overcome this limitation. The equation is stated in the following way: Hence the formula is given as

$$n = \frac{Z^2(P)(1 - P)}{C^2}$$

Where Z= the standard normal deviation set at 95% confidence level

P=percentage picking a choice or response (10%)

C=Confidence interval

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.10)(1-0.90)}{0.05^2}$$

n=138.30

n~138

The study comprises a sample of 138 adult participants, including residents and key personnel from the National Ambulance Service (NAS) in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Sampling methods are essential in determining how participants are selected for research and are typically categorized into probability and non-probability techniques (Lamm & Lamm, 2019). In this study, a stratified random sampling approach is employed to select members of the public for the survey, ensuring demographic diversity across variables such as age, gender, and location (urban and peri-urban communities). This method enhances the representativeness of the data and supports broader generalizability.

In parallel, purposive sampling is used to select NAS staff, specifically targeting individuals involved in public relations, communication, and operations. These participants are deliberately chosen based on their direct roles in internal and external communication, which are central to the study's aim of exploring how public relations strategies influence public trust in Emergency Medical Services. As noted by Sanjaya et al. (2022), purposive sampling allows researchers to obtain meaningful insights from information-rich respondents, particularly where specialized knowledge is required. This dual-sampling strategy balances statistical rigor with contextual depth. Stratified random sampling captures diverse public perspectives, while purposive sampling offers qualitative depth by engaging NAS personnel who possess first-hand experience in institutional communication, crisis messaging, and community engagement. The selection methods were informed by practical considerations, including resource constraints, access limitations, and the need to secure voluntary participation, ensuring the feasibility and effectiveness of the study design.

3.6 Research Instrument

Quantitative data will be collected from the general public in the Greater Accra Region using structured surveys, designed to capture measurable indicators such as Crisis communication strategies, Shaping Internal Communication, Community Relations Initiatives, and Brand Awareness and Visibility, and dependent variable (Public trust building). The survey instrument will utilize a five-point Likert scale, which is considered effective due to its balanced format that allows respondents to express varying degrees of agreement or disagreement while minimizing response bias and misinterpretation (Gundry & Deterding, 2019). The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), providing a clear framework for analyzing respondent attitudes.

The questionnaire will be structured in two parts. The first section will gather demographic and background information from respondents. The second section will focus on the key variables of interest, including public relations strategies and public trust in EMS, aligned with the study's theoretical framework. Survey items will be adapted from validated instruments in the literature, selected based on established reliability coefficients, as the tool will not undergo a pretest. To ensure clarity and relevance, the questionnaire will be refined before full deployment to address potential issues related to grammar, ambiguity, or contextual appropriateness. The finalized questionnaire will be self-administered with the assistance of three trained research assistants, under the supervision of the principal investigator. All participants will be fully briefed on the study's purpose, scope, and confidentiality measures. Informed consent will be obtained, and participation will be strictly voluntary, with assurances of respondent anonymity. Permission will also be formally secured from relevant authorities and local leaders in the selected communities before data collection begins. The survey will be conducted over a period of one month. For

respondents unable or unwilling to participate in person, alternatives will be offered, including hand-delivered paper formats or online questionnaires. The instrument will be administered exclusively in English to maintain consistency and facilitate accurate data interpretation. Complementing the quantitative component, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key personnel from the National Ambulance Service (NAS). These interviews aim to generate qualitative insights into internal communication strategies, institutional challenges, and trust-building efforts, offering a deeper contextual understanding to support and enrich the quantitative findings.

3.5 Validity of Research Instrument

To ensure the validity of measurements, Arabaninezhad and Fakher (2021) emphasize the importance of assessing only the specific aspects intended for evaluation. According to Momeni et al. (2021), validity refers to the appropriateness of data collected through instruments in relation to their specified objectives. Sürücü and Maslakçi (2020) highlight the necessity for the measuring instruments to accurately capture the variables of interest to ensure the usefulness of a study. In the context of questionnaires, validity also pertains to the effectiveness of instruments in fulfilling their intended purposes. Various types of validity, such as face validity, criterion validity, content validity, and construct validity, have been proposed in the literature by Sürücü and Sağbaş (2021). While content and construct validity are commonly observed in academic writing, it is essential to note that validity encompasses a broader spectrum beyond these types.

The concept of face validity suggests that an indicator appears to be a suitable representation of the underlying idea, as stated by Sürücü and Sağbaş (2021). The assessment of a questionnaire's visual appeal considers factors like practicality, readability, consistency in style, and linguistic clarity. Researchers evaluate the usefulness, clarity, and lack of ambiguity in the items of an

instrument, as emphasized by Sürücü and Maslakçi (2020). However, face validity is often considered the least robust form of validity due to its subjective nature, with some scholars questioning its validity altogether (Momeni et al., 2021).

Content validity in questionnaires is typically established through expert reviews, involving a subjective evaluation based on the reviewers' opinions. On the other hand, construct validity can be assessed through factor analysis, examining how well items align with expected components. Factor analysis is utilized to monitor the construct validity of measures, providing insights into the dimensional aspects of constructs. The results of factor analysis determined using indicators such as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for sample adequacy and factor loading for commonality among items, help quantify the relationships between scale items and constructs.

When considering instrument reliability, researchers often adopt established questionnaires from the literature. Internal consistency reliability is utilized to assess whether items within a scale consistently represent a single dimension or concept, as noted by Baik et al. (2019). Cronbach's alpha serves as a reliability index, indicating the extent to which actual scores differentiate hypothetical variables (Pérez-Castilla et al., 2019). A Cronbach alpha coefficient exceeding 0.80 is considered optimal, while a value of 0.7 is deemed adequate for assessing reliability. Scholars advocate for pre-testing instruments to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of words, phrases, and question sequences for study participants (Clark and Watson, 2019)

3.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis process forms a critical component of this research, as the chosen analytical techniques directly influence the validity of the study's conclusions, findings, and recommendations. In this mixed-methods study, data analysis will involve both quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively assess how public relations practices influence public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the Greater Accra Region.

For the quantitative component, data collected from structured public surveys will be entered into and organized using Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. The analysis will include descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize the characteristics of the data. To explore relationships between key variables such as communication strategies and levels of public trust, Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used. Additionally, multiple linear regression analysis will be conducted to assess the predictive impact of public relations variables (e.g., crisis communication, media visibility, internal messaging) on the dependent variable public trust in EMS. For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews conducted with NAS personnel will be transcribed and subjected to thematic content analysis. This approach will facilitate the identification of recurring patterns and themes related to internal communication strategies, institutional constraints, and trust-building initiatives within the EMS context.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

When conducting research, it is essential to adhere to a defined set of principles known as ethical considerations (Dive et al., 2022). As emphasized by Navalta et al. (2019), researchers must proactively address potential ethical challenges, including issues related to informed consent, participant harm, confidentiality, anonymity, and conflicts of interest. In this study, one of the

foremost ethical priorities during the data collection phase was obtaining informed consent from all participants. Before participation, individuals were fully briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only individuals who provided explicit consent were included. Those who expressed discomfort—particularly regarding the disclosure of workplace-related information—were respectfully excluded. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, without any repercussions. Another critical ethical consideration was the protection of participant confidentiality and anonymity. To uphold these principles, all data collected through surveys and interviews were securely stored, with access restricted to authorized members of the research team. Additionally, steps were taken to ensure that none of the data collection tools contained personally identifiable information such as names, addresses, phone numbers, or institutional affiliations. This approach guaranteed that responses could not be traced back to individual participants, thus preserving their anonymity throughout the study.

By embedding these ethical safeguards into the research process, the study not only complied with institutional and national guidelines but also demonstrated a strong commitment to respecting participants' rights, dignity, and privacy throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

3.8 Profile of New Juaben Municipal Assembly

The Greater Accra Region, located in the southeastern part of Ghana, is the smallest of the country's sixteen administrative regions in terms of land size but is the most densely populated and urbanized. It serves as Ghana's political and economic hub, with Accra, the national capital, functioning as the seat of government and a central point for major business, health, and administrative activities. The region covers an area of approximately 3,245 square kilometers and is home to more than 5 million people, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021).

The region is composed of 29 administrative districts, including metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies (MMDAs), such as the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Ga East, Ga South, and La-Nkwantanang Madina Municipality. These areas reflect a mix of urban and peri-urban settings, with significant variation in access to healthcare, infrastructure, and public services.

Greater Accra also hosts numerous national-level institutions, including the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Health Service, and the National Ambulance Service (NAS) Headquarters. The NAS operates actively throughout the region, offering pre-hospital emergency care and serving as a critical lifeline in both urban and less accessible peri-urban communities.

The region's diverse population includes a mix of ethnic groups primarily Ga-Dangme, Akan, Ewe, and Northern ethnicities—alongside significant migrant populations from other regions and neighboring countries. This cultural diversity makes the region ideal for examining public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), particularly through the lens of public relations and communication strategies. Additionally, the presence of modern health infrastructure, numerous media outlets, high literacy levels, and an increasingly connected population provides a suitable environment for studying the impact of public relations on public trust, as residents regularly engage with both traditional and digital communication platforms. These dynamics collectively make Greater Accra a strategically relevant and empirically rich setting for this investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the comprehensive empirical results and in-depth analysis of the study, highlighting key insights derived from the respondents' data. The dataset was thoroughly examined using SPSS version 27, with a rigorous multivariate regression analysis employed to determine the significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The chapter is systematically structured into distinct sections: respondent demographics, reliability analysis, correlation assessment, model summary, overall model significance, model coefficients, and an interpretive discussion aligned with the study's objectives and hypotheses.

4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

The demographic profile of respondents provides crucial context for understanding the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, particularly in relation to the National Ambulance Service (NAS). The findings from Table 4.1 reveal a sample that is diverse across age, gender, and educational backgrounds, offering valuable insights into how different population groups perceive and interact with EMS communication and trust-building efforts.

The age distribution indicates that the largest proportion of respondents falls within the 25–44-year range, accounting for over 82% of the total sample. This group represents the economically active and socially engaged segment of the population, who are more likely to have direct or indirect encounters with EMS operations. Their dominant representation suggests that perceptions of public trust are largely influenced by individuals who are both informed and socially mobile, making them a critical audience for NAS's public relations strategies. The relatively small

percentage of respondents aged 45–54 years (6.8%) and 18–24 years (10.6%) highlights that older adults and younger citizens might be less engaged or have limited exposure to EMS services. This pattern underscores the need for targeted communication approaches that reach these underrepresented groups, especially through community engagement and educational outreach.

Gender distribution shows that 65.2% of respondents were male and 34.8% female, suggesting a male-dominated respondent pool. This imbalance might reflect either the occupational composition of those who interact more frequently with EMS or gender differences in willingness to participate in surveys. In the context of public relations and trust-building, this implies that the NAS must ensure that its communication strategies are inclusive and sensitive to gender dynamics. Public trust can only be effectively strengthened if both men and women perceive EMS as accessible, responsive, and transparent in its service delivery.

The educational profile of respondents reveals that more than half (51.5%) possess tertiary education, while 22% hold postgraduate qualifications and 26.5% have secondary-level education. This relatively high educational attainment suggests that most respondents are capable of critically evaluating information disseminated by EMS. Consequently, public relations campaigns should employ professional and factual messaging that resonates with a well-informed audience. However, the presence of respondents with lower educational levels also emphasizes the importance of using simple, relatable language in communication to ensure inclusivity.

The demographic analysis demonstrates that trust-building through public relations in Ghana's EMS must be strategically designed to accommodate variations in age, gender, and education. The findings highlight that while the majority of respondents are well-positioned to understand and evaluate EMS communications, broader engagement strategies are essential to foster trust across all social segments of the Ghanaian public.

Table 4.1 Demographics of respondents

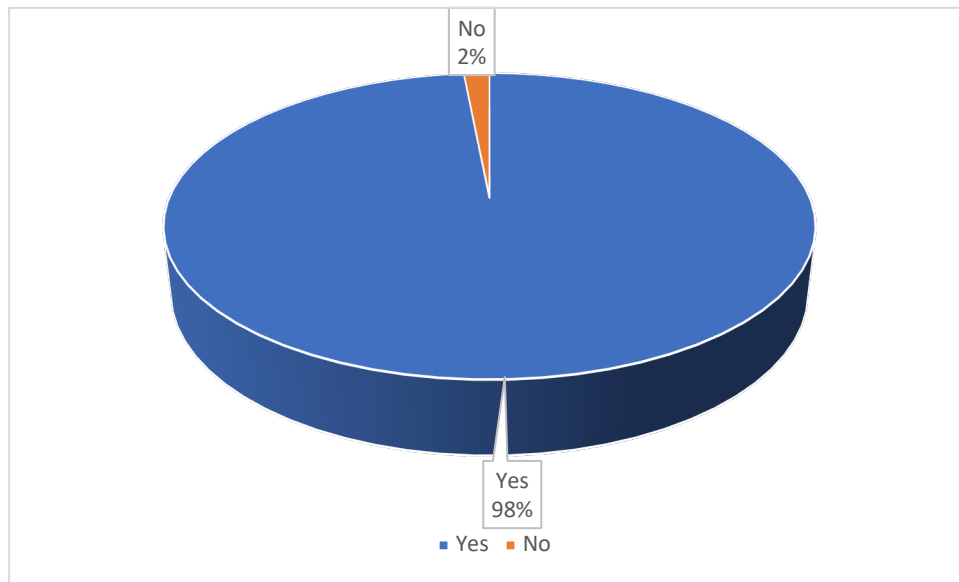
Category	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age group	18–24 years	14	10.6
	25–34 years	53	40.2
	35–44 years	56	42.4
	45–54 years	9	6.8
	Total	132	100.0
Gender	Male	86	65.2
	Female	46	34.8
	Total	132	100.0
Highest level of education	Secondary/SHS	35	26.5
	Tertiary (Diploma/Bachelor’s)	68	51.5
	Postgraduate (Master’s/Doctorate)	29	22.0
	Total	132	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

4.1.1 Have you ever heard about the National Ambulance Service in Ghana

The result in Figure 4.1 indicates that an overwhelming majority of respondents (98%) have heard about the National Ambulance Service (NAS), while only a small fraction (2%) reported no awareness. This exceptionally high level of awareness reflects the success of the NAS’s public relations and communication strategies in disseminating information about its existence and role in emergency medical services across Ghana. Such widespread recognition suggests that the Service has effectively penetrated public consciousness through media coverage, community engagement, and visibility during emergency responses. The minimal percentage of respondents unaware of NAS underscores the effectiveness of ongoing outreach and branding initiatives that

have positioned the Service as a vital public institution. However, awareness alone does not necessarily equate to trust or satisfaction. While these findings demonstrate that public relations efforts have achieved broad informational reach, they also highlight the importance of deepening public understanding of NAS's functions, reliability, and response efficiency. To consolidate public trust, communication strategies must move beyond visibility toward emphasizing transparency, accountability, and service outcomes. In essence, this high awareness level provides a strong foundation upon which the NAS can further strengthen its relationship with the public through consistent, credible, and empathetic engagement.



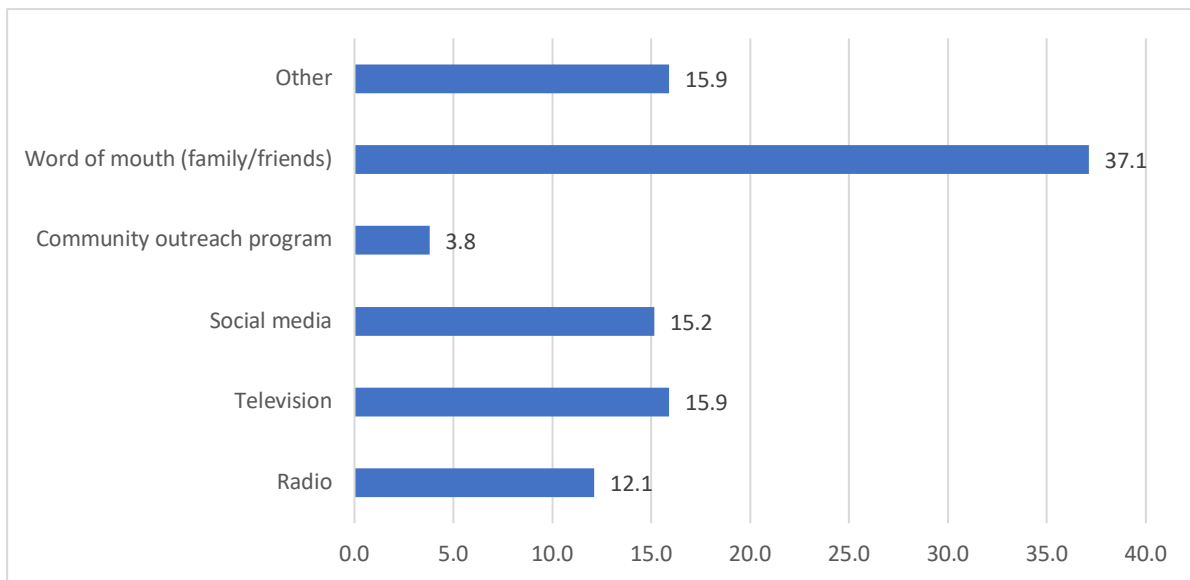
Source: Fieldwork, (2025)

Figure 4.1: Have you ever heard about the National Ambulance Service in Ghana

4.1.2 How did you first hear about the National Ambulance Service

The result in Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents (37.1%) first learned about the National Ambulance Service (NAS) through word of mouth, primarily from family and friends. This finding highlights the significant influence of interpersonal communication in shaping public awareness and perceptions of EMS in Ghana. Such reliance on informal channels suggests that

community-based trust networks play a crucial role in information dissemination. Television, social media, and radio also emerged as notable sources, accounting for 15.9%, 15.2%, and 12.1% respectively, underscoring the relevance of traditional and digital media in complementing interpersonal communication. The relatively lower proportion (3.8%) who first heard of the NAS through community outreach programs indicates that direct institutional engagement remains limited and could be strengthened to foster deeper public trust and understanding of EMS operations. The inclusion of “other” sources (15.9%) reflects the diversity of communication pathways, possibly encompassing public events, print media, or online campaigns. Collectively, these findings suggest that while mass media and social media are effective in raising visibility, personal recommendations and word-of-mouth communication are pivotal in establishing credibility and trust in the NAS. Strengthening these informal networks through structured public relations initiatives could further enhance the Service’s reputation and community confidence.



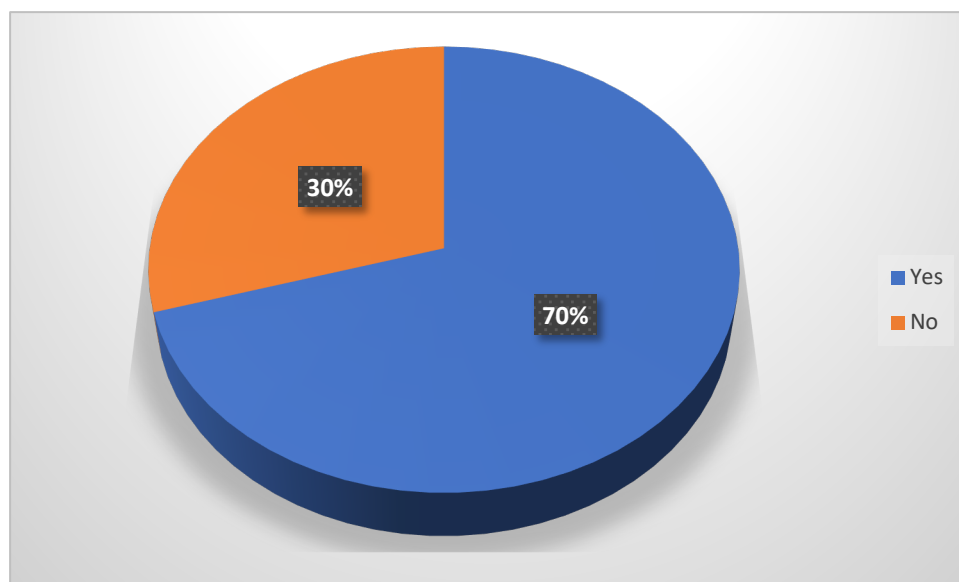
Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Figure 4.2: How did you first hear about the National Ambulance Service

4.1.4: Do you know the official emergency number to call the National Ambulance Service

The result of Figure 4.3 indicates that while a majority of respondents (70.5%) know the official emergency number to contact the National Ambulance Service (NAS), a considerable 29.5% do not. This finding reflects both the achievements and the limitations of public relations and communication efforts in promoting emergency contact information in Ghana. The relatively high awareness level demonstrates that public education campaigns, media announcements, and outreach programs have had some success in informing citizens about how to access EMS.

However, the fact that nearly one-third of respondents remain unaware of the emergency number signals a critical communication gap that could have life-threatening implications in emergencies. Effective emergency response depends on public readiness, and a lack of knowledge about the correct contact number undermines the efficiency of the system. This shortfall may stem from inadequate information dissemination, limited rural outreach, or inconsistent visibility of emergency contact details in public spaces and media. To enhance public trust and usability of EMS, the NAS must intensify its communication strategies by integrating emergency contact promotion into school programs, community forums, and media campaigns. Ensuring that every citizen knows how to quickly reach EMS is not only vital for response effectiveness but also fundamental to reinforcing public confidence in the Service.



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

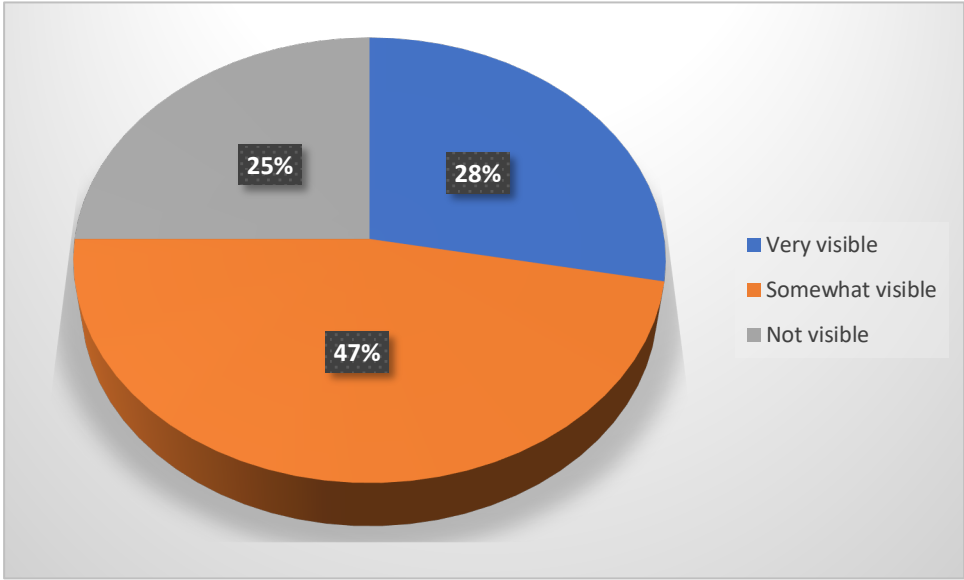
Figure 4.3 Do you know the official emergency number to call the National Ambulance Service

4.1.5: How visible do you think the National Ambulance Service is in your community

The findings reveal that 28% of respondents consider the National Ambulance Service (NAS) to be very visible in their communities in Figure 4.4, while 47% perceive it as somewhat visible, and 25% believe it is not visible at all. These results indicate that although the majority of respondents recognize some level of NAS presence, the service’s visibility remains uneven across different localities.

The relatively low percentage of respondents perceiving the NAS as highly visible suggests that while the organization has made notable strides in establishing a public presence, its outreach and operational visibility are not yet comprehensive. Limited visibility could stem from inadequate public engagement, insufficient ambulance coverage in remote areas, or a lack of consistent branding and communication efforts at the community level. Visibility is a key factor in building public trust, as frequent and positive encounters with emergency services reinforce perceptions of

reliability and accessibility. Therefore, the NAS must strengthen its public relations initiatives by increasing the frequency of community interactions, awareness programs, and media representation. Enhancing the visibility of ambulances, personnel, and educational campaigns would help foster stronger public recognition and confidence, ultimately improving the public's trust in the Service's ability to respond effectively during emergencies.



Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Figure 4.4: How visible do you think the National Ambulance Service is in your community

4.2 Diagnostics of the study

This section presents the various diagnostic tests conducted to ensure that the assumptions underlying the inferential analysis were satisfied. The diagnostics performed include assessments of reliability and collinearity to confirm the robustness and validity of the analytical model.

4.2.1 Reliability Test

A thorough reliability analysis was conducted on the study's key variables: crisis communication strategies, internal communication practices, community relations initiatives, brand awareness and

visibility, and public trust building to verify their consistency in representing the relationships among them. As presented in Table 4.2, the analysis revealed a remarkably high Cronbach’s alpha value, indicating excellent internal consistency across the measurement items.

According to prior studies, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient above 0.600 is considered acceptable for research reliability (Roberts & Priest, 2006; Fitzner, 2007; Bannigan & Watson, 2009). In this study, the overall Cronbach’s alpha was recorded at an impressive 0.903, underscoring the robustness and dependability of the data. This high level of reliability demonstrates that the selected variables effectively capture the underlying constructs being examined. Consequently, the findings reinforce the validity of the analytical framework and affirm the suitability of the variables for examining the relationships among public relations activities and public trust in emergency medical services. The strong reliability results further enhance the credibility and accuracy of the study’s conclusions, providing a solid foundation for interpreting the subsequent inferential analyses and supporting the study’s overall research objectives.

Table 4.2 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.903	0.893	33

4.2.2 Collinearity test

In a study of this magnitude, addressing the issue of multicollinearity is crucial, as it can significantly affect the reliability and interpretability of a multiple regression model. Multicollinearity occurs when independent variables are highly interrelated, leading to unstable or biased estimates of regression coefficients (Dormann et al., 2013). According to Kock (2017), the problem becomes critical when correlation coefficients among independent variables exceed 0.7.

In the present study, all Pearson correlation coefficients among the independent variables were found to be below this threshold, indicating that the dataset does not suffer from multicollinearity. This finding affirms that each variable, crisis communication strategies, internal communication practices, community relations initiatives, and brand awareness and visibility makes a distinct contribution to explaining variations in public trust building. The absence of strong intercorrelations ensures that the regression model can accurately capture the independent influence of each predictor variable. Consequently, this strengthens the validity of the inferential analysis and supports the appropriateness of employing multiple linear regression to assess the relationships within the study framework. Further details regarding the Pearson correlation outcomes are provided in Table 4.3, which substantiates the robustness and reliability of the data used for analysis.

4.3 Relationship between the role of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The correlation results presented in Table 4.3 reveal strong and statistically significant relationships between public trust building (PTB) and the key dimensions of public relations in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), including crisis communication strategies (CCS), shaping internal communication (SIC), community relations initiatives (CRI), and brand awareness and visibility (BAV). The results demonstrate that all correlation coefficients are positive and significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that improvements in each of these public relations components contribute meaningfully to strengthening public trust in the National Ambulance Service (NAS).

The strongest association is observed between PTB and CCS, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.779$, suggesting that effective crisis communication plays a crucial role in fostering trust. This

highlights the importance of transparent, timely, and empathetic communication during emergencies, which reassures the public of the Service's reliability and responsiveness. Similarly, PTB's correlation with BAV ($r = 0.739$) emphasizes the impact of visibility and brand recognition on public confidence. When the public frequently encounters positive representations of the NAS through media coverage, branding, or public engagement, they are more likely to perceive the organization as credible and trustworthy.

The relationship between PTB and CRI ($r = 0.655$) further illustrates how consistent community engagement enhances trust by demonstrating accountability and responsiveness to local needs. Meanwhile, PTB's moderate correlation with SIC ($r = 0.449$) indicates that while internal communication contributes to public trust, its effects are more indirect likely influencing trust through improved staff coordination, morale, and service quality. The significant intercorrelations among the independent variables particularly between CCS and BAV ($r = 0.752$) show that these public relations components are interdependent, collectively shaping the public's overall trust in EMS operations.

Findings affirm that strategic public relations practices are vital in cultivating and sustaining public trust in Ghana's emergency medical services. The strength of these correlations underscores that effective communication, strong community engagement, consistent visibility, and cohesive internal communication are integral to the NAS's credibility and reputation. These results validate the conceptual framework of the study, confirming that well-executed public relations strategies serve as a cornerstone for building durable public trust in EMS delivery.

Table 4.3: Relationship between the role of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Variable		PTB	CCS	SIC	CRI	BAV
Public Trust Building (PTB)	Pearson Correlation	1	.779**	.449**	.655**	.739**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
Crisis Communication Strategies (CCS)	Pearson Correlation	.779**	1	.377**	.587**	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
Shaping Internal Communication (SIC)	Pearson Correlation	.449**	.377**	1	.383**	.394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
Community Relations Initiatives (CRI)	Pearson Correlation	.655**	.587**	.383**	1	.616**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
Brand Awareness and Visibility (BAV)	Pearson Correlation	.739**	.752**	.394**	.616**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	132	132	132	132	132

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

4.4 The Role of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The regression analysis presented in Table 4.5 provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, with specific reference to the National Ambulance Service (NAS). The model explores how four key public relations dimensions, crisis communication strategies, shaping internal communication, community relations initiatives, and brand awareness and visibility contribute to public trust building. The results reveal a strong and statistically significant model, with an R value of 0.838 and an R² of 0.702, indicating that approximately 70.2% of the variance in public trust building can be explained by the combined influence of these independent variables. This demonstrates that

public relations functions collectively play a dominant and meaningful role in influencing the level of trust the public places in EMS operations. The model's F-statistic value of 74.810 with a significance level of 0.000 further confirms the overall fitness of the regression model, meaning the predictors significantly explain variations in public trust building at the 95% confidence level.

All four predictors were accepted as significant contributors to public trust, as reflected in their p-values being below the 0.05 significance threshold. The strong collective influence of these public relations variables on trust building supports the theoretical framework that effective communication, transparency, engagement, and visibility are foundational to fostering public confidence in emergency services. The high R^2 value of 0.702 further underscores that these dimensions are critical determinants of trust, leaving only about 29.8% of the variation unexplained by other potential factors such as past experiences, media portrayals, or individual perceptions of service performance.

In essence, the regression analysis validates that the role of public relations in EMS is both strategic and indispensable. Crisis communication remains the most powerful trust-building mechanism, followed closely by brand visibility and community relations. Internal communication, though less impactful in magnitude, still contributes meaningfully by ensuring organizational coherence and professionalism. The results collectively highlight that building and maintaining public trust in emergency medical services requires a holistic communication approach that integrates both external and internal public relations efforts. For the National Ambulance Service, these findings emphasize the need to sustain transparent communication during emergencies, expand outreach programs, and enhance visibility through consistent branding and public engagement. Doing so will not only strengthen trust but also ensure that citizens view EMS as a dependable, credible, and integral part of Ghana's public health and safety system.

4.5 Regression Model

The regression analysis presented in Table 4.5 provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, with specific reference to the National Ambulance Service (NAS). The model explores how four key public relations dimensions, crisis communication strategies, shaping internal communication, community relations initiatives, and brand awareness and visibility contribute to public trust building.

4.5.1 Crisis communication strategies used by EMS influence public trust during emergencies

Among the individual predictors, crisis communication strategies emerged as the most influential factor, with an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.441, a standardized Beta value of 0.433, and a highly significant p-value (0.000). This finding implies that effective crisis communication encompassing timely information sharing, accuracy, transparency, and responsiveness during emergencies has the strongest positive effect on public trust. It highlights that when the NAS communicates clearly and promptly during crises, it reinforces public confidence in its competence and reliability. This outcome aligns with crisis communication theory, which posits that proactive and transparent information flow during emergencies mitigates public uncertainty and enhances institutional credibility. This result was also supported by the qualitative study from the management of the institution.

The participant emphasized the centrality of communication within the operations of the National Ambulance Service (NAS), underscoring its pivotal role in teamwork and service delivery. According to the respondent, “*internal communication has always been key,*” highlighting that

effective coordination among staff is indispensable in the context of emergency medical services, where every action can determine the outcome of a life.

The participant explained that personnel are trained to recognize communication as an integral component of their duties, stating that “*communication forms a great part of whatever thing we do because you cannot work alone.*” This reflection illustrates the collective nature of EMS operations, where collaboration and information sharing are critical to timely and effective responses.

The participant further stressed that the NAS operates as a cohesive team rather than as isolated individuals. They emphasized the need to “*continue to talk amongst ourselves, to create a very strong bond among staff,*” reinforcing the idea that trust and unity among employees enhance operational efficiency. Through regular interaction and mutual understanding, staff members ensure that each assigned role is executed effectively.

The respondent concluded that such communication ensures “*everybody’s role... in preserving life is being done,*” reflecting a culture of shared responsibility and accountability. Overall, this insight underscores that internal communication is not merely procedural but foundational to sustaining teamwork, organizational cohesion, and the overarching mission of saving and preserving lives in emergency contexts.

4.5.2 The role of employee relations in shaping the internal communication culture and its effect on public trust.

Shaping internal communication also shows a positive and statistically significant effect on public trust building, with $B = 0.106$, $\text{Beta} = 0.111$, and $p = 0.041$. Although its impact is relatively modest compared to other variables, the result underscores the importance of effective internal communication within EMS organizations. When staff members are well-informed, motivated,

and aligned with institutional goals, they deliver better services, which in turn strengthens public perception and trust. This finding reinforces the idea that trust is not only built externally through public campaigns but also internally through efficient coordination and communication among personnel. A cohesive internal communication system ensures consistency in service delivery and message dissemination, thereby enhancing the organization's overall image. This result was also supported by the qualitative study from the management of the institution.

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is not merely procedural but foundational to sustaining teamwork, organizational cohesion, and the overarching mission of saving and preserving lives in emergency contexts.

4.5.3 The impact of community relations initiatives on public engagement and trust in EMS

Community relations initiatives also significantly contribute to public trust, as evidenced by $B = 0.239$, $\text{Beta} = 0.211$, and $p = 0.001$. This relationship suggests that active engagement with local communities through outreach programs, health education, and participatory events plays a crucial role in building trust. By fostering positive relationships and demonstrating accountability to the communities they serve, EMS organizations like the NAS enhance public understanding of their mission and services. These initiatives humanize the organization, bridging the gap between service providers and citizens. Consequently, the public perceives the NAS as approachable, responsive, and community-oriented, which enhances its legitimacy and reliability as an emergency service institution. This result was also supported by the qualitative study from the management of the institution. Participants emphasized the crucial role of community outreach programs in strengthening the relationship between the National Ambulance Service (NAS) and the public. They highlighted that such initiatives extend far beyond formal press releases or media appearances, offering more personalized and impactful engagement. As one participant explained, *“community outreach programs really help us... it helps us beyond what the press statement does... and our public engagements on radio stations and TV stations,”* emphasizing that these face-to-face interactions foster a deeper level of understanding and trust.

Through these programs, NAS personnel are able to interact directly with community members, addressing their concerns and misconceptions without the distortion of third-party communication. This direct engagement allows for open dialogue where participants can express their expectations

and receive firsthand explanations about EMS operations and challenges. According to one respondent,

“whoever that is coming to partake in that training or whatever engagements you are having with them tends to come before you and bring to you their concerns directly.” Such encounters, they noted, provide opportunities for mutual learning, where the Service can explain the reasons behind certain emergency responses while also educating the public on basic life-saving actions before ambulances arrive.

The participants further observed that these interactions humanize the Service, helping community members appreciate its purpose, limitations, and dedication. They described these outreach efforts as “one of the very important things we do that helps us build that trust with the public,” underscoring how personalized engagement transforms abstract institutional communication into genuine relationship-building. Through these programs, the NAS not only enhances public understanding of its role but also empowers citizens to take part in emergency preparedness, thereby deepening the trust and collaboration essential for effective emergency medical service delivery in Ghana.

4.5.4 Brand awareness and visibility influence public utilization and trust in EMS services.

Brand awareness and visibility also show a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with public trust, with $B = 0.225$, $\text{Beta} = 0.239$, and $p = 0.003$. This indicates that the more visible and recognizable the NAS brand becomes through media presence, public education campaigns, and branding of ambulances the greater the level of trust among the public. Visibility helps reinforce credibility by keeping the organization in the public consciousness, particularly through consistent exposure to its logos, uniforms, and public activities. In the Ghanaian context, where public institutions often struggle with reputation management, maintaining high visibility through

positive publicity plays a vital role in affirming the NAS's operational readiness and reliability. This finding aligns with the principles of image restoration and reputation management, which emphasize the need for continuous and strategic visibility to maintain positive public sentiment. This result was also supported by the qualitative study from the management of the institution. Participants emphasized that the National Ambulance Service (NAS) has made remarkable progress in its two decades of operation, successfully establishing a recognizable and respected brand across Ghana. One participant proudly stated,

“Ambulance service over the years twenty-one years has achieved a lot of success. Everybody in Ghana, only a few people, who sometimes do not want to learn... everybody knows about NAS and the Brussels brand.”

This reflection underscores the widespread awareness and positive perception the Service has cultivated through consistent performance and visibility. However, participants were equally mindful that sustaining such reputation requires continuous effort and strategic public relations interventions. As one participant explained,

“Public Relations is about enhancing the reputation or the image you have, and to maintain it. So what we are looking at this point, we have achieved success. We need to work hard to maintain it.”

This sentiment highlights the participants' understanding that reputation management is an ongoing process that extends beyond achieving recognition. They expressed concern that complacency could undermine the credibility the NAS has built over the years, drawing comparisons with other public institutions that have lost public confidence. As one participant cautioned,

“We have some state institutions, when you even hear of them, people said no... what can they do? So Ambulance Service, we should not drive ourselves into that state. We should maintain what we have.”

This perspective reinforces the importance of sustaining professionalism, visibility, and consistent branding as central pillars of public trust. Moreover, participants acknowledged that the behavior and professionalism of employees play a pivotal role in shaping the organization’s public image. One respondent noted,

“The best strategy is basically based on employees the way they conduct themselves.” This statement reflects a strong recognition that public trust is not only built through institutional policies or campaigns but also through the daily actions and attitudes of staff members who directly interact with the public.

The participants’ reflections reveal a deep awareness of the need to protect and enhance the NAS’s brand reputation through proactive communication, disciplined conduct, and sustained visibility. Their insights underscore that maintaining public trust requires both organizational commitment and individual responsibility, aligning with the principles of relationship management and long-term reputation building in public relations practice.

Table 4.4 Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	0.151	1.191			0.127	0.900	
Crisis communication strategies	0.441	0.077	0.433		5.702	0.000	Accepted
Shaping internal communication	0.106	0.051	0.111		2.062	0.041	Accepted
Community relations initiatives	0.239	0.073	0.211		3.287	0.001	Accepted
Brand awareness and visibility	0.225	0.074	0.239		3.055	0.003	Accepted
R	0.838						
R Square	0.702						
F-statistics	74.810						
Sign	0.000						

a. Dependent Variable: Public trust building

4.6 Discussion of the study

Based on the results presented above, the following discussion elaborates on the nature of the relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable, providing a deeper understanding of how these factors collectively influence public trust building.

4.6.1 Crisis communication strategies used by EMS influence public trust during emergencies

Crisis communication strategies play a pivotal role in shaping public trust during emergencies, as explained through Relationship Management Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). According to Relationship Management Theory, trust is built and sustained through continuous, transparent, and mutually beneficial communication between institutions and their publics (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Johnston et al., 2020).

In the context of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, effective crisis communication fosters a sense of partnership between the National Ambulance Service (NAS) and the public by promoting accountability, responsiveness, and empathy during crises. This aligns with findings by Daniels & Abuosi (2020) and Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2019), who observed that consistent and open communication strengthens relational quality and enhances confidence in health service institutions.

From the SCCT perspective, organizations must select appropriate response strategies based on the nature of the crisis and perceived responsibility (Coombs, 2007; Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2025). During emergencies, timely and accurate communication helps reduce misinformation and public anxiety, thereby protecting institutional reputation and reinforcing trust (Haruna et al., 2022; Yevo et al., 2023). Studies by Majid et al. (2021) and Apriliani et al. (2024) confirm that proactive crisis communication mitigates reputational damage and enhances credibility. Similarly, Melki et

al. (2021) and Pak et al. (2021) found that empathetic and transparent messaging fosters emotional connection and public reassurance both central to sustaining trust.

Empirical evidence from Bamidele et al. (2025), Khankeh et al. (2025), and Al Hadeed et al. (2024) further supports that effective communication strategies during emergencies directly influence citizens' perceptions of EMS competence and reliability. Thus, within the Ghanaian EMS framework, clear, prompt, and transparent communication not only aligns with theoretical expectations but also substantiates the study's regression findings that crisis communication is the strongest predictor of public trust, reinforcing the essential role of public relations in emergency management.

4.6.2 The role of employee relations in shaping the internal communication culture and its effect on public trust.

Drawing on Relationship Management Theory (RMT) and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the positive influence of internal communication on public trust building within Emergency Medical Services (EMS) reflects a fundamental relational dynamic between the organization and its stakeholders. RMT posits that sustainable trust is achieved when organizations prioritize mutual understanding, commitment, and transparent communication, both internally and externally (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Johnston et al., 2020).

Within the EMS context, internal communication functions as the backbone of relationship quality, ensuring that staff share consistent values, messaging, and performance standards. When communication is structured and inclusive, it fosters teamwork, enhances morale, and empowers personnel to act as credible ambassadors of the institution's reputation (Daniels & Abuosi, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019).

From the perspective of SCCT, internal communication is pivotal during crises, as employees serve as both frontline responders and information conduits. Effective internal dialogue reduces uncertainty, aligns crisis responses, and prevents misinformation from undermining institutional credibility (Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2025; Haruna et al., 2022). When EMS personnel receive timely and clear information, they communicate more confidently and empathetically with the public, reinforcing perceptions of competence and transparency (Yevo et al., 2023; Bamidele et al., 2025). This alignment between internal cohesion and external communication outcomes embodies the SCCT principle that trust recovery depends on consistent, credible messaging across all organizational levels.

Empirical evidence supports this integration. Studies highlight that in healthcare and emergency contexts, internal communication enhances operational readiness and public trust (Ward, 2017; Majid et al., 2021; Melki et al., 2021; Pak et al., 2021). Similarly, Khankeh et al. (2025), Apriliani et al. (2024), and Al Hadeed et al. (2024) emphasize that organizations with strong internal communication cultures exhibit higher resilience and reputational strength during crises. Thus, shaping internal communication in EMS not only ensures efficient coordination but also translates into greater external trust, affirming that relational integrity begins within the organization itself.

4.6.3 The impact of community relations initiatives on public engagement and trust in EMS

The finding that community relations initiatives significantly influence public trust in the National Ambulance Service (NAS) aligns closely with the principles of Relationship Management Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). According to Relationship Management Theory, effective public relations goes beyond message dissemination they focus on building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Johnston et al., 2020).

In this context, the NAS's active engagement with communities through health education, outreach programs, and participatory events fosters relational qualities such as trust, openness, and commitment. These interactions enable communities to perceive the NAS not merely as a service provider but as a partner dedicated to their welfare. By demonstrating accountability and responsiveness, the NAS reinforces a sense of shared responsibility and emotional connection, which are key determinants of long-term trust and loyalty (Daniels & Abuosi, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019).

From the lens of SCCT, proactive community relations serve as a pre-crisis trust-building mechanism that enhances organizational resilience during emergencies (Ward, 2017; Melki et al., 2021). When the NAS invests in community-based communication and visibility, it establishes reputational capital that can buffer against potential skepticism or criticism in times of crisis (Pak et al., 2021; Al Hadeed et al., 2024).

Scholars such as Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2025) and Khankeh et al. (2025) emphasize that consistent engagement fosters perceived credibility and legitimacy, crucial for maintaining public cooperation during emergency responses. Moreover, Bamidele et al. (2025) and Majid et al. (2021) highlight that community-focused public relations empower citizens with knowledge and trust, enabling more effective collaboration between the public and EMS teams.

Ultimately, community relations initiatives within the NAS embody the relational and ethical dimensions of modern public relations practice, confirming that continuous, transparent engagement nurtures enduring trust and strengthens the social fabric upon which effective emergency medical response depends.

4.6.4 Brand awareness and visibility influence public utilization and trust in EMS services.

The significant positive relationship between brand awareness and visibility and public trust in the National Ambulance Service (NAS) can be effectively explained through Relationship Management Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Relationship Management Theory posits that public relations is fundamentally about cultivating, maintaining, and strengthening mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Roud & Gausdal, 2019; Johnston et al., 2020).

Within this framework, the NAS's visibility through media presence, branded ambulances, and public education campaigns functions as a trust-building mechanism. When the public consistently encounters the NAS brand in a transparent and credible manner, it fosters familiarity, reliability, and emotional connection key ingredients for long-term relational trust (Daniels & Abuosi, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2019). High brand visibility, therefore, does not merely enhance recognition but signals accountability and commitment, encouraging citizens to perceive the NAS as dependable and responsive during emergencies.

From the SCCT perspective, visibility and brand awareness are vital components of effective crisis communication. According to Coombs's model, reinforced by recent empirical studies (Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2025; Haruna et al., 2022; Yevo et al., 2023), the way an organization communicates and positions itself before, during, and after crises shapes public perception of its legitimacy and trustworthiness.

In the context of EMS, where crises are frequent and often life-threatening, sustained visibility through proactive communication enhances the organization's credibility even before crises occur. When the NAS maintains strong public visibility, it strengthens its "reservoir of goodwill,"

allowing the public to interpret future crises with empathy and understanding rather than blame (Bamidele et al., 2025; Ward, 2017).

Furthermore, consistent visibility aligns with reputation management principles, where positive brand exposure contributes to reputation resilience during crises (Khankeh et al., 2025; Majid et al., 2021). Research by Apriliani et al. (2024) and Melki et al. (2021) indicates that visible public institutions are more likely to be trusted because visibility conveys transparency and operational readiness. In Ghana, where skepticism toward public institutions can undermine service utilization, continuous visibility reassures citizens that EMS is active, accessible, and reliable.

This dynamic supports the notion that trust is not built through crisis response alone but through continuous engagement and visibility across multiple communication channels (Pak et al., 2021; Al Hadeed et al., 2024). The findings confirm that brand awareness and visibility serve as strategic trust-building tools rooted in relational and crisis communication theory. Through sustained and credible visibility, the NAS strengthens its relational bonds with the public, mitigates skepticism, and reinforces trust in its capacity to deliver emergency medical services effectively and transparently.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The concluding chapter of the research effectively synthesizes the results, draws clear and definitive conclusions, and offers meaningful recommendations based on the findings. Within this chapter, a detailed subsection elaborates on the specific objectives of the study, aligning them closely with the outcomes of the research. The recommendations section provides valuable suggestions grounded in the study's key findings, offering practical and actionable insights. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting potential avenues for future research, paving the way for further exploration and advancement in the field.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study explores the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, focusing specifically on the National Ambulance Service (NAS). By integrating empirical findings with existing literature, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how public relations strategies such as crisis communication, internal communication, community engagement, and brand visibility collectively influence public trust in EMS operations.

The findings reveal strong alignment with the study's objectives, demonstrating that effective and transparent communication practices significantly enhance trust and credibility between the NAS and the public. The outcomes contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on public sector communication and trust-building, offering valuable insights into how strategic public relations

can strengthen institutional reputation, foster community relationships, and improve public responsiveness to emergency medical services in Ghana.

5.1.1 Crisis communication strategies used by EMS influence public trust during emergencies

The findings revealed that crisis communication strategies emerged as the most influential factor that influences public trust during emergencies. This finding implies that effective crisis communication encompassing timely information sharing, accuracy, transparency, and responsiveness during emergencies has the strongest positive effect on public trust. It highlights that when the NAS communicates clearly and promptly during crises, it reinforces public confidence in its competence and reliability. This outcome aligns with crisis communication theory, which posits that proactive and transparent information flow during emergencies mitigates public uncertainty and enhances institutional credibility.

5.1.2 The role of employee relations in shaping the internal communication culture and its effect on public trust.

The findings also show that shaping internal communication also has a positive and statistically significant effect on public trust building. Although its impact is relatively modest compared to other variables, the result underscores the importance of effective internal communication within EMS organizations. When staff members are well-informed, motivated, and aligned with institutional goals, they deliver better services, which in turn strengthens public perception and trust. This finding reinforces the idea that trust is not only built externally through public campaigns but also internally through efficient coordination and communication among personnel. A cohesive internal communication system ensures consistency in service delivery and message dissemination, thereby enhancing the organization's overall image.

5.1.3 The impact of community relations initiatives on public engagement and trust in EMS

In addition, community relations initiatives also significantly contribute to public trust. This relationship suggests that active engagement with local communities through outreach programs, health education, and participatory events plays a crucial role in building trust. By fostering positive relationships and demonstrating accountability to the communities they serve, EMS organizations like the NAS enhance public understanding of their mission and services. These initiatives humanize the organization, bridging the gap between service providers and citizens. Consequently, the public perceives the NAS as approachable, responsive, and community-oriented, which enhances its legitimacy and reliability as an emergency service institution.

5.1.4 Brand awareness and visibility influence public utilization and trust in EMS services.

Finally, brand awareness and visibility also show a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with public trust. This indicates that the more visible and recognizable the NAS brand becomes through media presence, public education campaigns, and branding of ambulances the greater the level of trust among the public. Visibility helps reinforce credibility by keeping the organization in the public consciousness, particularly through consistent exposure to its logos, uniforms, and public activities. In the Ghanaian context, where public institutions often struggle with reputation management, maintaining high visibility through positive publicity plays a vital role in affirming the NAS's operational readiness and reliability. This finding aligns with the principles of image restoration and reputation management, which emphasize the need for continuous and strategic visibility to maintain positive public sentiment.

5.2 Conclusion

This study aims to provide a detailed examination of the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana, using the National Ambulance Service (NAS) as a case study. Employing a robust quantitative design and inferential statistical analysis, the study presents strong empirical evidence on how different public relations dimensions influence public confidence in EMS operations. The explanatory research approach was carefully adopted to explore the relationships among the core variables crisis communication strategies, shaping internal communication, community relations initiatives, and brand awareness and visibility, each of which plays a critical role in strengthening trust between the NAS and the Ghanaian public. The study utilized SPSS version 27 to analyze data obtained from 132 respondents, ensuring methodological rigor and reliability.

The regression analysis revealed a highly significant and well-fitting model with an R^2 value of 0.702, signifying that approximately 70.2% of the variation in public trust building can be explained by the combined effect of the four public relations variables and p-value of 0.000 confirmed the overall significance of the model, reinforcing the importance of these public relations factors in shaping public perceptions of EMS in Ghana. Among the predictors, crisis communication strategies emerged as the strongest determinant of public trust, demonstrating that transparent, prompt, and empathetic communication during emergencies is central to building and sustaining credibility. Internal communication also showed a positive and statistically significant relationship, emphasizing that effective coordination and collaboration among staff enhance consistency and service delivery, which indirectly fosters public confidence. Similarly, community relations initiatives significantly contributed to trust building, underscoring that outreach activities, education campaigns, and community involvement strengthen the relational bond between the

NAS and citizens. Finally, brand awareness and visibility had a substantial positive influence, revealing that consistent visibility through branding, public campaigns, and media presence boosts recognition and trust in EMS. The findings confirm that all four dimensions of public relations play vital and complementary roles in enhancing public trust in the National Ambulance Service. The results highlight that trust in EMS is not built by operational efficiency alone but through sustained, transparent, and strategic communication that connects institutional actions with public expectations.

5.3 Recommendation of the study

Based on the findings, several key recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of public relations in building public trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana.

Policy formulation: Policymakers within the Ministry of Health and the National Ambulance Service (NAS) should institutionalize a comprehensive communication policy that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in public relations. Such a framework should mandate regular public updates, crisis communication protocols, and proactive media engagement to enhance trust and credibility. Additionally, policies should prioritize funding for communication infrastructure, including training programs for EMS personnel in public engagement and information management.

Organizational recommendations: The NAS should strengthen its internal communication systems to foster teamwork, coordination, and morale among staff. Establishing a Public Relations and Communications Directorate with specialized units for crisis management, community outreach, and digital communication would improve message consistency and public responsiveness. Regular community engagement programs and educational campaigns should also be implemented to promote public understanding of EMS operations and procedures. Enhancing

visibility through branded ambulances, uniforms, and media collaborations will further reinforce the NAS's credibility and accessibility.

Academic and theoretical foundation: Future research should expand the theoretical integration of Relationship Management Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to deepen understanding of how relational and communicative factors influence public trust in emergency contexts. Academic institutions should incorporate EMS-focused communication management modules into public relations and health communication curricula to build local expertise. The findings also contribute to the growing body of literature on strategic communication in the public health sector, offering a theoretical framework that connects public relations practices to institutional legitimacy and trust-building.

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Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CLIENTS

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Media Arts and Communication (UNIMAC), conducting this research as part of the requirements for the award of a master's degree. Your operational area has been selected for a study on the topic: "The Role of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Ghana: A Case Study of the National Ambulance Service, Ghana." This study is purely for academic purposes, and I kindly seek your voluntary cooperation in completing the questionnaire or participating in an interview. Please be assured that all information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be disclosed to any third party. Your input is highly valuable and will contribute greatly to the success of this research and my academic progression. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort you will dedicate to assisting me in completing this programme successfully.

Thank you.

SECTION A: Demographic Section

1. Age group:

- 18–24 years
- 25–34 years
- 35–44 years
- 45–54 years
- 55 years and above

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female

3. Highest level of education:

- No formal education
- Primary education
- Secondary/SHS
- Tertiary (Diploma/Bachelor's)
- Postgraduate (Master's/Doctorate)

4. Have you ever heard about the National Ambulance Service in Ghana?

- Yes
- No

5. How did you first hear about the National Ambulance Service?

- Radio
- Television
- Social media
- Community outreach program
- Word of mouth (family/friends)
- Other (please specify) _____

6. Do you know the official emergency number to call the National Ambulance Service?

- Yes
- No

7. How visible do you think the National Ambulance Service is in your community?

- Very visible
- Somewhat visible
- Not visible

SECTION B: The Role of Public Relations in Building Public Trust in Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Please rate the following by ticking the most appropriate response using the options interpreted below 1 = Strongly disagree 2 =Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree.

S/N	Crisis Communication Strategies	1	2	3	4	5
CCS1	The National Ambulance Service communicates quickly during medical emergencies and crises.					
CCS2	Messages from the Service during emergencies are clear and easy to understand.					
CCS3	I trust the National Ambulance Service’s communication during crises.					
CCS4	The Service uses multiple platforms (e.g., radio, TV, social media, community channels) to reach the public during emergencies.					
CCS5	The crisis communication of the National Ambulance Service helps reduce public uncertainty during health emergencies.					
S/N	Shaping Internal Communication	1	2	3	4	5

SIC1	Internal communication within the National Ambulance Service is open and transparent.					
SIC2	Employees of the Service receive timely updates about important operational and organizational issues.					
SIC3	Leaders and management of the Service listen to employee concerns.					
SIC4	Communication between management and staff builds trust within the organization.					
SIC5	I feel well-informed about the Service's goals, policies, and emergency response protocols.					
SIC6	Internal communication within the National Ambulance Service is open and transparent.					
S/N	Community Relations Initiatives	1	2	3	4	5
CRI1	The National Ambulance Service actively participates in health and community outreach initiatives.					
CRI2	Community programs by the Service reflect genuine concern for public health and social well-being.					
CRI3	The Service supports local health development and welfare projects.					
CRI4	Community engagement activities by the Service are consistent and visible.					
CRI5	These community initiatives strengthen public perception of the National Ambulance Service.					
S/N	Brand Awareness and Visibility	1	2	3	4	5
BAV1	I can easily recognize the National Ambulance Service as Ghana's official emergency medical service provider.					
BAV2	The Service's brand is consistently visible across different media channels and platforms.					
BAV3	The National Ambulance Service brand stands out among other emergency service providers.					
BAV4	The Service communicates values of care, safety, and trust that I identify with.					
BAV5	I am more likely to seek help from the National Ambulance Service because it is well-known and credible.					
S/N	Public Trust Building	1	2	3	4	5
PTB1	I believe the National Ambulance Service acts in the public's best interest.					
PTB2	The Service is transparent in its dealings with stakeholders and the public.					
PTB3	I have confidence in the decisions and actions of the National Ambulance Service.					
PTB4	The Service demonstrates accountability in its operations and communications.					

PTB5	Overall, I trust the National Ambulance Service.					
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Source: Huang (2008), Lee & Jahng (2020), Pološki Vokić et al. (2021), Kim et al. (2024),
Apriliani et al. (2024), Mansor & KaderAli (2017), Siegrist et al. (2012).

Thank You

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide for Management and Employees of NAS

1. How does the National Ambulance Service currently communicate with the public during emergencies, and how effective do you think these strategies are in building trust?
2. Can you share an example of a crisis situation where communication played a key role in managing public perception? What worked well, and what challenges did you face?
3. How would you describe the communication culture within the organization? In your view, how does internal communication affect teamwork and service delivery?
4. In what ways do you feel management listens to and addresses employee concerns? How does this affect your confidence and performance on the job?
5. Do you think the way employees and management communicate internally has an impact on how the public perceives the Service? Why or why not?
6. What kinds of community outreach or engagement programs does the Service run, and how do you think they influence public trust in NAS, especially in underserved areas?
7. What barriers or difficulties has NAS faced in engaging with local communities, and how have these been addressed?
8. How visible do you believe the National Ambulance Service brand is to the general public? What strategies are being used to make the Service more recognizable?
9. In your opinion, what factors most influence whether people call and trust the National Ambulance Service in an emergency?
10. From your perspective, what improvements could be made in communication, branding, or community engagement to strengthen public trust in the National Ambulance Service?