

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION  
DURING A CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 STRIKE AT DAYSTAR  
UNIVERSITY

by

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A thesis presented to the School of Communication

Daystar University  
Nairobi, Kenya

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS  
in Communication

July 2020

APPROVAL

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION  
DURING A CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 STRIKE AT DAYSTAR  
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## DECLARATION

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION  
DURING A CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 STRIKE AT DAYSTAR  
UNIVERSITY

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the almighty God for granting me the strength and patience during this journey. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to my academic supervisors, Ms. Ruth Owino and Daniel Onyango Omondi, for their invaluable advice, guidance, and support throughout this study. I also wish to acknowledge my parents, Dr. Eric O. Manyasa and Emily Narotso Mulanya, for their love, support, and patience throughout my education process. Finally, a hearty thanks to my beloved sisters; Maureen Eileen Nabwire, Mercy Edna Adhiambo, Mona Lindsay Nafula; and cousin, Rhys Lytony Mulanya; for their support and encouragement during my thesis writing process.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCS	Crisis Communication Strategies
CMT	Crisis Management Team
CRS	Crisis Response Strategy
DUSA	Daystar University Students Association
DU-ERB	Daystar University Ethics Review Board
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SMCM	Social Mediated Crisis Model
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
VC	Vice Chancellor
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor

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## ABSTRACT

This study purposed to assess social media usage by the Daystar University and students during the 2017/2018 crisis at the University, and whether the usage influenced the corporate reputation of the University. The research objectives were to determine how social media was used, examine crisis communication management during the crisis, and assess the effects of social media usage. Using Coombs situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) and the social mediated crisis model (SMCM), the researcher sought to establish the crisis response strategies adopted during the crisis. The study employed a descriptive research design. Stratified random sampling was utilized to sample 120 respondents for the questionnaires, while purposive sampling was used to select 4 respondents for the interviews. Findings indicated that 51.7% of the students used social media to get information on the crisis and 61.8% of the respondents cited that the university did not effectively use SM during student's unrest. Interview findings indicated that social media usage by the students affected the institution's reputation. The study recommends that the university develops a social media strategy for future use in case of a crisis. Such a strategy would ensure that the organization utilizes the platforms appropriately and adequately to minimize the adverse effects of a crisis. The SCCT crisis response strategy can be adopted and tweaked to meet an organization needs when managing crisis communication on social media. Social media platforms can be utilized to monitor for potential threats and conflicts, to avoid such crisis from pro-longing or before conflicts morphs into a full-blown crisis which can eventually damage institutions reputation

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents and siblings for the unfailing love and support they gave me throughout my academic journey.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

During a crisis, an organization must be ready to handle the predicament effectively because a crisis can undoubtedly cost an organization's image and reputation (Ford, 2013). Organizations with poor corporate reputations are perceived with distrust by their stakeholders especially during a crisis. A less favorable reputation has also been known to have negative effect on an organization's operations (Hill & Knowlton, 2006; Page & Fearn, 2005). With crises being unpredictable, they can ensue to every individual, and subject an organizations reputation to risk (Jordan-Meier, 2011). Before the advent of social media, crisis management was regarded as a primary communication function whereby the communications department wrote the crisis manual and arranged media training for management (Sapriel, 2003). During those times information was disseminated mainly through broadcast and print media.

Social media has however provided challenging scenarios and opportunities for crisis managers and organizations that are faced with crises. The SM tools are altering the way in which crises develop, how they are managed and how they are communicated (Kelly, 2014). For instance, a second is enough for a crisis to spread on social media and damage the reputation of the organization. In the case of Daystar University, twitter was used to amplify the student's unrest that started off from a simple boycott of classes. During the crisis, students spent significant time on social media discussing, analyzing, and sharing about issues that led to the crisis.

Further, individuals have utilized social media to disapprove and confront establishments and their response strategies to crises (Wendling, Radisch, & Jacobzone, 2013). Thus, organizations can no longer give a blind eye to what is said about them online. Favorable reputations that have been built over years can be damaged instantly, as people generally build an organization's authenticity through their social media observations and interpretation and further what they share through the social networking platforms (Ryschka, Domke-Damonte, Keels, & Nagel, 2016).

In the case of Daystar University, the impact of the social media postings and discourse on the University reputation has not yet been studied nor evaluated. This study therefore assessed social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis, and to find out if the corporate reputation was affected by use of social media. This study was anchored on the management of crisis communication and corporate reputation. This chapter discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, rationale, significance, assumptions, scope, limitations and delimitations of the study, and definition of terms.

### Background to the Study

Social media has significantly contributed to organizational crises happening frequently and with more enormity (Coombs, 2014). This is as an outcome of social media facilitating the circulation of user generated content which sometimes is false. Thus, organizations can no longer give a blind eye to what is said about them online as the content shared may damage their reputation. Frandsen and Johansen (2007) stated that not managing social media correctly, or not being present on social media, especially during a crisis, can result in a double crisis. They stated that a double crisis,

happens when the novel crisis is outshined by a ‘communication crisis’ as the organization has been unsuccessful on carrying out the needed practices of communication (Frandsen & Johansen 2007). Failure by the organization to mention the crisis on their online channels, is considered as the organization ignorance of the crisis (Coombs, 2010).

Despite being an avenue for crises brewing and escalation, social media platforms can be exploited to aid an organization communicate the crisis successfully (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008). These platforms provide monitoring and communication solutions to circulate information rapidly as compared to traditional media. For crisis management, crisis communication is an essential aspect of any organization’s reputation. Crisis management was defined by Bernstein (2011) as “the art of preventing or minimizing business or organizational loss when threatened by a crisis” (P.7). Crisis communication is considered essential in crisis management as it permits an organization to relay communication to internal staff, clients, and the media. It further minimizes problems caused by misleading communications.

Coombs (2006) stated that communicating during a crisis is a defensive approach meant to save public image of an individual, company or institution facing a challenge. When dealing with crises, which are regarded as inevitable, most organizations are concerned with protecting their reputation. Communicating effectively with stakeholders during a crisis is one of the ways in which reputations can be protected. Effective communication entails talking to staff, customers, merchants, providers, and the media. Since, crisis communication has mainly been associated with public image and reputation of organizations, when faced with a crisis, an organization is prone to negative perceptions from its stakeholders.

A negative reflection of a company by its stakeholders has the potential of tarnishing the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2014). Organizations must therefore endeavor to sustain a good stakeholder relationship during a crisis to avoid injuring their reputation. Organizations have over the years become more concerned about the perception of different stakeholders. Those with good reputations strive to maintain high standards of practice regardless of the circumstances (Richardson & Bolesh, 2002).

Social media has adversely altered crisis communication conditions, the platforms have enabled crises to spread and develop differently (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). A crisis can escalate from a complaint from one online user about a specific company can result into a crisis. Several organizations have fallen victim to crises that emanated from social media. For instance, Italian clothing brand Gucci felt the heat of social media when it launched a controversial jumper that social media users found racist. The brand was forced to issue an apology and remove the merchandise from its stores and online (Griffith, 2019). Despite the apology, social media users were still displeased that they embarked on a mission to boycott the brand and its merchandise. They also called for boycott of Gucci products. The case of Gucci emphasized the importance of defining crisis within an organization and creating an understanding on how to manage it.

Coombs and Holladay (2012), on one hand, described a crisis as an occurrence that impends significant experiences of stakeholders besides affecting an organization's performances. This is because when stakeholders get involved with an organization, they put in so much faith in their operations and how they portray themselves anything contrary to what they have signed up for may result to a crisis.

Harrison (2000), on the other hand, defined crisis as an intense change normally for the worse. The crisis can take any form, ranging from a disaster, loss of life or intense property damage from an event, or it may occur as a result of unwanted enquiry because of an organization's behavior or its workers' behavior. Floods, fires, and accidents for instance, can lead to the loss of life and destruction of property. These events as much as they are termed as crises cannot be predicted. In an organizational setting however, a crisis can be said to be a precise, unanticipated, and non-routine incident or series of happenings that generate uncertainty and concurrently present an organization with opportunities and risks to its important goal (Mitroff, 2005).

Before the development of social media, individuals depended majorly on news broadcasts and newspaper articles to be notified on the unfolding of events. However, Strander (2011) noted that with time, different platforms have taken over and are now regarded as mediums of breaking news. The news on the terrorist attack at Dusit D2 on Riverside drive in Nairobi, Kenya was for instance broken to the public on social media even before media outlets could break the news. The victims of the attack turned to social media to seek for help and to communicate with their families. For instance, Ronald Ngeno a Facebook user, posted on his Facebook and twitter account "Please pray for us we are under attack, massive terrorist attack, massive bomb blast then gunshots please pray, the prayers of the righteous availeth much" (Ngeno, 2019). Such instances are indications of social media's influence on crisis communication and management.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) on one hand outlined that social media is "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated

content” (p.61). The different forms social media takes includes magazines, internet discussions, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, and social bookmarking (Baruah, 2012). These tools facilitate interactions amongst users, and permits content generation, interaction on them and sharing of these with one another. In this study, social media are social networking sites (SNS) for instance Twitter and Facebook that were used by individuals with internet access, they are network sites used to communicate during the student’s unrest.

Social media has allowed everybody to be a source of information, allowing users to share views, perceptions, and familiarities with others (Marken, 2007). These characteristics of social media as stated by González-Herrero and Smith (2008) make them a trigger and facilitator of crisis. Since the power is in the hands of the internet users it is impossible to control what is being said about the institution. In the case of Daystar University for instance, during the student’s unrest, the students created a hashtag that depicted the school as rotten. A hashtag, often used on the social media site Twitter is a method of subject identification on SNS (Vistbacka, 2017).

These platforms consequently pose new challenges for crisis communication and management. For instance, the platforms allow free flow of information, this is very crucial as the chances of reputational risks have been heightened (Kaul et al., 2015). This puts the managers in a position where they must act instantly when the comments start flowing. Effective communication on social media during a crisis expects the managers to respond to the claims and complains that come up on social media. But since hundreds of tweets are sent in a minute, it becomes very difficult to respond to everyone. Ensuring that the messages are consistent across all channels is also a challenge during a crisis that has escalated on SNS. González-Herrero and

Smith (2010) noted that today investors have instant information access as a result of online media which have multiple sources of information. So much power has been handed to them, making them capable of rallying the online community against an organization.

Despite social media noticeably making crisis management extra multifaceted, it also presents new instruments for crisis management (Solis 2008). These can be used by organizations to anticipate a crisis (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011). For instance, negative comments from online users about products and services can be indicators of a looming crisis. However, if an organization monitors and identifies the prodromes on time, they may prevent the situation. Similarly, their usage in a crisis according to Roshan, Warren, and Carr (2016) has led to a better understanding of organizational structures, strategies, and performance levels. Collectively, these tools together with effective strategies of crisis communication postulate opportunities for an intimate connection with stakeholders, in addition to reducing or averting a crisis. Crisis managers are thus projected to exploit the supremacy of social media in a crisis to issue rapid responses and to correct half-truths (Ryschka, et al., 2016).

Social media strategies for crisis communication have been successfully implemented globally due to the real time reaction from the public it encourages (Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016). Different organizations have adopted different social media strategies in the event of a crisis. The strategies when used alongside other crisis response strategies can reduce the effects or even prevent a crisis from occurring (Wendling, Radisch, & Jacobzone, 2013). Crisis management helps in preventing or plummeting negative outcomes of a crisis Coombs (2010).

During crisis, social media is always a buzz with information from different sources. The information is sometimes not credible, and when an organization does not respond on time the untrue messages may go viral and cause the crisis to escalate further. Ignoring what is said on social media may be viewed as ignorance on the side of the organization, Ulmer et al. (2011) accentuated on the need of social media being incorporated in the crisis response, to foil negative perceptions from their stakeholders. This is important because social media provides the most direct and cost-effective channel for supplying stakeholders with sense making information during a crisis by sharing important and time sensitive information quickly to the people (Holmes, 2011).

The social networking sites enable users to interact because of its two-way communication strategy. This plan is advantageous for organizations during a crisis as it allows them to sieve out the main concerns of their stakeholders during a crisis, and address them accordingly (Jiang, Luo, & Kulemeka, 2016). Crises when poorly managed can negatively affect organizations resulting to countless losses and ruining its reputation (Ulmer et al., 2011). In institutions of higher learning, a trustworthy and steady population of students is fundamental for them to carry out their operations (Snoeijers, Poels, & Nicolay, 2014). It is however difficult to enroll students to an institution of higher learning if its reputation is tainted. Thus, universities should strive to ensure enrollment of students is high in order to keep the school operational.

#### Historical Background of Daystar University

Daystar University has over the years maintained a good relationship with the public despite having experienced crises in earlier years. Through corporate

advertising, the university has been branded as an institution where stars are made (Daystar University, 2016) The university is anchored on servant leadership, integrity, excellence, quality customer service and effective communication (Daystar University, 2016). With such a background, Daystar University was the last institution expected to have undergone through such a crisis.

In 2017, Daystar University faced a crisis, as a result of several complaints against the administration including high tuition fee, misuse of funds, complacency of senior management, a culture of intimidation, broken hostels and facilities, students expected to use clinic (Ngina, 2017). Social media especially Twitter played a role in escalating the crisis.

The students used social media to voice out their grievances with the hashtags #DaystarLivesMatter, #DaystarUniversityStrikeand #DaystarUniversityRot. The first day of the hashtag saw the University trend at number one for five hours on Twitter. The students had resorted on a silent protest by boycotting classes to compel the administration to address their grievances. However, the boycott escalated to a full-blown strike that saw students in both campuses evacuated from the university premises.

A report on a survey by Consumer Insight (2013) indicated that social media dominates consumption of internet among individuals aged between 7-25. Facebook and Twitter have been noted to form a brilliant platform for institutions to interconnect and uphold truthful relationships with their learners (Dabner, 2012). This explains the active participation of institution of higher learning on social media. A look into Daystar University's social media presence shows that the institution joined Facebook on February 25, 2011 and February 22, 2011 on Twitter. However, the

University's social media platforms were inactive until 2014. Before then, the institution did not use social media to its full potential instead it utilized Television, and Radio for most of its external communication. At the time of crisis, Daystar University had not mastered and understood the power of social media.

Even in crisis, the institution continued to be used, for instance, notification on the closure of the university was shared through memos to the students, however the students went ahead to share the memo online. The university similarly held a press briefing to announce the closure of the school. The upside of utilizing traditional forms of communication is the provision of control of information and maximum accountability (Kelly, 2014). In the era of social media where flow of real time information is enabled and the alterations in how crisis develops, are perceived and communicated, organizations can no longer rely on traditional media only to manage a crisis (Ryschka et al., 2016).

While the Daystar University communicated through their Facebook page, the students were actively communicating through Twitter and YouTube. The case of Daystar University is an example of how most reputable institutions are more prone to crisis due to the assumption that the structure in place is well grounded to ensure smooth running of the institution for the long-term. Siema (1994) seconded this by stating that the problem is various organizations lack a crisis management plan, and if there is one then it is not well executed as probably there is inadequate expertise in putting up one and utilizing it when need be. Management at institutions of higher learning can evade or be well equipped to tackle crises, through efficient communication and a crisis communication plan (Rawjee & Hussain, 2014).

### Statement of the Problem

The advent of social media has transformed the development, communication, and management of crises. Consequently, it has also redefined crisis communication strategies used during crisis. Social media also pose adverse effects to the reputation of any organization thus there is need to strategize on how to manage social media, especially in crisis. Case in point is a study by Modeus, Paulson, and Olsson (2012) that confirmed social media is vital tool for the management of crisis since it determines the direction of the crisis. Modeus et al. (2012) recommended for a social media strategy that monitors and provides feedback mechanisms for quick responses to prevent further escalation of a crisis.

Ryschka et al. (2016) studied the factors that affect corporate reputation during a crisis, and they found out that during a crisis, familiarity of a brand, public's cultural values and speed of response while using social media have an impact on corporate reputation. From the studies, however, Ryschka et al. (2016) stated that the platforms influence the crisis, but little has been studied about their impact on corporate reputation, especially during a crisis.

In the case of Daystar University, the 2017/2018 crisis led to student's unrest that lasted seven months and escalated to social media which brought in external influence that could have had an impact on the university reputation. The student's unrest happened in both campuses and affected both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The university was twice closed, examinations were cancelled, and the university calendar was affected. The students engaged the external players through social media, expressed their concerns and shared the status of the university on social media. The external stakeholders included the media and Ministry of Education. The

unrest had undisrupted normal running of the institution and subjected it to public scrutiny.

It is against this backdrop that this study sought to assess social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis at Daystar University. The study endeavored to establish whether the 2017/2018 crisis had any effects on the corporate reputation of the University, examine crisis communication management at Daystar University during the 2017/2018 crisis, and, assess the effects of social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis on the corporate reputation of Daystar University.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess social media usage by Daystar University and students during the 2017/2018 crisis at the University, and whether the crisis had an impact on the corporate reputation of the University.

#### Research Objectives

1. To determine how social media was used by the Daystar University and its students during the 2017/2018 crisis at the University.
2. To examine crisis communication management at Daystar University during the 2017/2018 crisis.
3. To assess the effects of social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis on the corporate reputation of Daystar University.

#### Research Questions

1. How was social media used during the 2017/2018 crisis at Daystar University?

2. How did Daystar University manage crisis communication during the 2017/2018 crisis?
3. How did social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis affect the corporate reputation of Daystar University?

#### Justification for the Study

Social media's emergence has created an open and blatant setting, where individuals' views can be shared with others. This novel world has created new bottlenecks in the field of crisis management (Modeus et al., 2012). The 2017/2018 students unrest disrupted normalcy at the institution, including two indefinite closures. The crisis which escalated on social media depicts how social media has altered the approach to crisis communication and management. Therefore, there was a need to establish the impact of the crisis that escalated on social media on the corporate reputation and to examine the crisis management at Daystar University.

The researcher through this study hoped to provide insightful information on proper social media usage in the event of a crisis. Since social media platforms are a popular medium for interactions among university students, the study provided insights on how to handle the social media platforms and minimize crises. Other institutions of higher learning would also benefit from this study as it identified the best suited strategy to use during a student's unrest.

### Significance of the Study

The study's finding provides insightful information on the appropriate ways of utilizing social media in the event of a crisis to help avert adverse effects it may pose on an organization's reputation.

The study also provided awareness on management of crisis institutions of higher learning. The findings of the study are of benefit to the university and other private institutions of higher learning to harness the power social media in crisis communication and management. The study determined how social media strategies should be customized to fit individual needs while safeguarding its reputation.

For the institutions of higher learning, lessons from the crisis and how it was handled can aid in the formation of policies for responders, which involve content to be shared, who has control and the general operations for crisis communication. This ensures speedy and efficient response to crisis.

To academicians, the study would build information that would help understand crisis communication and management functions through social media. The research also built on the current works and knowledge in crisis communication by offering a balance for future research in the field. It provides a basis through which theory can be related to practice.

### Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed the following:

1. Daystar University had a social media strategy that was used during the 2017/2018 crisis.
2. Daystar University corporate reputation was affected by the 2017/2018 crisis.

3. Social media usage was a challenge for Daystar University during the 2017/2018 student's unrest.
4. Students who experienced the 2017/2018 strike were still registered at the institution at the time of the data collection for this study.
5. The respondents would agree to participate in the study and would provide honest and relevant data for the study.

#### Scope of the Study

The researcher conducted the study on the crisis Daystar University's experienced in 2017/2018. The study focused on the happenings that took place during the 2017/2018 student's unrest. The target was social media usage with particular focus on undergraduate students at Daystar University, and the staff members at the corporate affairs department.

#### Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The researcher acknowledged that focusing on a crisis is a sensitive issue as it may reveal issues that the institution may not want in the public sphere especially since the Corporate Affairs Department staff were part of the study. To counter this, the researcher ensured that the identity of the participants was concealed, and that the information provided during the interview would not be retraced back to them, this was done by using codes to present the data provided.

The researcher also acknowledged the possibility of fear of victimization from the school if findings from the study were negative. The researcher assured the respondents that the research was confidential and thus the respondents were not required to include their names in the data collection tools.

The researcher declared that she was a Master's in Communication student in the university where the data was collected, therefore there were chances of biasness. To counter this biasness, the researcher solicited the help of three research assistants and a professional data analyst, the research assistants assisted in data sampling and data collection. The researcher trained the research assistants on the procedures, processes, and objectives of the study for effective administering of the questionnaire and collection of relevant data for this study. This was carried out by identifying the buildings hosting each of the schools, courses offered on timetable, the year of study, the location of the lecture rooms where the courses were taking place.

This process ensured that the questionnaires were administered to the targeted sampling frame for this study. The in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher at the Corporate Affairs department, the researcher opted to conduct the interviews as the interaction would provide opportunity for the researcher opportunity to probe on related issues that would arise during the interview and also the unexpected, this is because the researcher was well conversed with the area under study.

The data analyst ensured objectivity by analysing the data as collected from the field. Once the research assistants collected all the questionnaires, they were cleaned to remove the spoiled ones and numbered for accountability. The researcher then handed over all the questionnaires to the data analyst who then analysed the data using SPSS. Data collected from the interviews which were in form of audio recordings were transcribed into written data through a software called NVivo. The transcribed data was then handed over to the data analyst who ensured that both the quantitative and quantitative data collected was captured in a meaningful and coherent

manner. This process was also used to clean the data and develop an analysis matrix that would be used to tabulate the quantitative data and organize the qualitative data meant to give in-depth detail that could not be captured by the questionnaire.

The researcher only took part in the presentation of the analysed data, interpretation, and conclusions. Moreover, the results of this study were compared to similar studies that used similar theories. In order to ensure reliability and validity of the research tools, the researcher pre-tested both the questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were pre-tested among the Postgraduate Psychology students, and the interviews were pre-tested with staff members at the School of communication. The response received from the pre-test were then used to adjust the questionnaires and procedures that were not clear, misunderstood or were ambiguous. The researcher ensured that the respondents were not included in the final data collection for the study

#### Definition of Key Terms

**Crisis:** Fearn-Banks (2007) defined a crisis as a happening with possibly undesirable outcomes on an organization, its stakeholders, products, services, and reputation. In this study, crisis referred to the Daystar University student's unrest of 2017/2018 that disrupted the normal running of the university.

**Crisis Communication:** A feature of crisis management that handles the media and communicates to key stakeholders, thereby managing the perceptions of the event (Fearn-Banks, 2007). In this study, crisis communication referred to the way information was shared with the students during the 2017/2018 crisis.

Crisis communication strategy: These are the real responses that the involved agents use to deal with a crisis and have both verbal and non-verbal aspects (Seeger, 2006). Crisis Communication strategy in this study referred to responses and means used by the university to share information regarding the student's unrest.

Crisis management: Bernstein (2011) crisis management as the art of preventing or minimizing business or organizational loss when threatened by a crisis. In this study, crisis management means the measures undertaken by the University to assist in doing away with the impact of the student's unrest.

Corporate reputation: is a perception of an organization formed by its stakeholders, who are the people who are affected by or can affect an organization (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 2007). According to this study, reputation is the perception the students have formed about Daystar University.

Used: In this study, the term "used" means, the respondents posted on either content about the unrest on Twitter, posted on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, or others.

Social media: Social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For this study, social media referred to the social networking sites that were used by the university and the students to share information about the crisis and the progress of the situation.

### Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction, background to the study, problem statement, research purpose, objectives of the study, research questions, and

justification of the study. The chapter has also outlined the scope, significance, assumptions, and limitations and delimitation of the study. The next chapter reviews relevant literature to this study and develops a theoretical and conceptual framework.

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter reviewed literature on utilization of social media in a crisis and their impact on corporate reputation. The areas reviewed include theories on social media and crisis communication, general literature on crisis communication, social media strategies, social media and crisis communication, social media, corporate reputation and social media, and corporate reputation. Empirical literature of the case studies was conducted, and the conceptual framework on the variables for this study.

The study was underpinned on the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) and social mediated crisis model (SMCM). The general literature was reviewed to capture the ideas of social media and corporate reputation in a crisis. Empirical literature discussed findings from studies conducted on both the world-wide and local perspective. Lastly, a conceptual framework that brought about the correlation between social media strategy usage and their effect on corporate reputation was explained.

#### Theoretical Framework

##### Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) was conceptualized by Coombs (2007b). The theory was developed by Coombs to safeguard an organizations reputation at the time of a crisis, it encompasses a research guide to select crisis response strategies and communicative resources. SCCT posited that a crisis dictates the selection of crisis response strategy based on crisis responsibility level and

reputational threat (Coombs, 2007b). The experimentally based theory was created by Coombs to give communications specialists indication to lead their decisions, fundamentally stating that, an organizations actions after the crisis are dependent on the crisis. The theory also pinpointed how key aspects of the crisis influence attributions about the crisis and the stakeholder reputation on the organization. He further argued that post crisis-communication is highly dependent on understanding the response of stakeholders to a crisis (Coombs, 2007b). SCCT is based on three fundamentals: crisis, crisis response strategies (CRS) and a technique for harmonizing the CRS and the crisis.

The situational crisis communication theory was established from attribution theory and employs the philosophies of blame and responsibility, but to a broader range of crises circumstances (Coombs, 2007b). Being able to comprehend utilization of crisis communication to guard reputational assets in a crisis is fundamental for crisis managers. In addition, the theory provides a mechanism for anticipating how stakeholders will react to a crisis in terms of the reputational threat posed by the crisis and predicts individuals' actions in response to the response strategies applied to manage the crisis (Coombs, 2007b).

Further, an evidence-based outline for understanding how to exploit on the reputational protection presented by post-crisis communication is presented by the theory. The level of threat is shaped by three factors, initial crisis responsibility, history of crisis, and relational reputation before. One of the predominant notions in crisis communication exploration is initial crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007b). Initial crisis responsibility alluded to the extent in which an organizations stakeholder

attributes the crisis to the organization and how mindful the main stakeholders hold the organization accountable for the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Coombs (2006) stated that evaluating the history of the crisis, the type, history and previous reputation with investors will assist crisis managers to imagine the level of reputational threat a crisis has on an organization and the way they view organizations stakeholders on the crisis and attribute crisis responsibility (Coombs & Holladay 2012). SCCT further affirmed that stakeholders assign crisis responsibility and decide its framing which is linked to crisis origin (Coombs, 2006). Crisis origin referred to whether a crisis began as a result of an issue emanating from within the organization or externally (Hilding-Hamann, 2012). The various kinds of crises inception origin influence the attribution of responsibility and, therefore the accessible crisis communication strategies (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). The degree of responsibility ascribed to the organization is particularly significant, as it determines its role in a crisis.

Communication strategies can be structured based on how a crisis develops since they have been anticipated to develop in a certain way the structuring of the communication strategies is necessary as crises are different, and the same strategy cannot be utilized across different crisis situations. Coombs (2007a) claimed that the greater the responsibility attributed to an organization at the time of a crisis, the higher the threat to reputation. Therefore, the ideal strategy in this case should be one that aims at rebuilding or improving an organizations reputation.

Further, Coombs SCCT assessed the reputational threat that a crisis poses and goes on further to provide crisis response strategies (CRS) based on the threat level (Coombs, 2007b). These strategies are used to attain healthy relationships amongst

companies and their stakeholders and are aligned to the crisis (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009). Crisis response strategies are public statements made after a crisis has occurred (Coombs, 1995). Whatever an organization says has significant implications for its reputation (Benoit, 1995). An organizations response strategy should be based on threat that a crisis poses and be further based on type, reputation prior to crisis, and the history of the crisis (Coombs, 2007b). Crisis managers select the strategy they deem fit for a crisis. Selecting an appropriate response strategy is vital when aiming at protecting organizational reputation (Coombs, 2006).

The image restoration approaches strategies are grouped into the five clusters of denial, responsibility evasion, offensiveness reduction, and mortification and corrective (Benoit, 1997). The denial strategies are made up of denial, intimidation and attacking. Organizations that adopt the denial strategy deny performing the act that holds them responsible for the crisis. This strategy can be effective if the organization in question did not do what they have been accused of. However, if an organization denies the claims and investigation proves that indeed they were responsible can lead to damaged reputation and image (Zaremba, 2010).

In evasion of responsibility, there is baiting whereby the organization says it was responding to act on behalf of another actor in the crisis; whereby the act can be annulled, and an organization can claim not to have the information regarding the crisis; accident-here an organization can advance that the act was accidental (Benoit, 1997). There are good intentions under evasion of responsibility whereby the organization can say it meant to do the right thing. In reducing the offensiveness, there are aspects of bolstering where the organizations past good deeds may come into play, also minimization that makes the crisis not to seem huge, differentiation where it

compares with others who have worse crisis, transcendence whereby attention is diverted towards another issue; attacking the accuser by reducing their credibility and compensating for the damage by reimbursing the affected (Benoit, 1997).

The organization would also choose corrective action in that there is admittance of crisis responsibility and take up to solving the crisis. According to Benoit (1997), the organization could also employ mortification and apologize for the crisis and restore things to normalcy that way (Benoit,1997).Additionally, Pfahl and Bates (2008) stated that a combination of situational and social constructionist approaches, Benoit (1995, 1997) offered an extensively used approach that offers a well-defined typology that fits well with public relations evaluations of crisis circumstances.

Coombs (2007b) clustered the SCCT strategies to four groups of strategies similar to Benoit's denial strategies which aim to dismiss the organization having a hand in the crisis. Downsizing attributions of organizational control over a crisis or the negative impacts is what the diminishment strategies endeavor to achieve. During a crisis organization employ rebuilding strategies as they seek to improve the organization's reputation. These three strategies symbolize numerous levels of accommodation, that display concern for the sufferers and exposes the amount of responsibility an organization acknowledges for the crisis. The last group bolstering strategies complement the others and intend to construct an affirmative relationship amongst an organization and its stakeholders.

Eliminating any link between an organization and the crisis is a major function of the denial strategies. In the case where an organization is the least concerned about the crisis, then it will not experience any damage from the situation. The group is

further categorized into three sub-strategies namely, attack the accuser, scapegoating and denial. For strategy that involves attacking the accuser, the crisis manager confronts the person or group stating an error in the organization. Denying that a crisis has occurred on the manager's part is an indication of denial strategy in play. Scapegoating is often used by the managers, and in this case, they shift blame for the crisis happening to an individual or a group that is not part of the organization (Coombs 2007a).

During a crisis when an organization insists that the crisis is not as bad as it has been portrayed by individuals or that the organization had no control over it, the diminish crisis response strategy has been utilized (Coombs, 2007b). Crisis effects tend to be reduced when crisis managers reduce an organizations connection to the crisis or further compel individuals to view the crisis less negatively (Coombs, 2007a). Two strategies make up diminish strategies and they are excuse strategy and the justification strategy. These strategies occur when the crisis manager tries to reduce the responsibility of an organization in the crisis by denying the intent to harm or asserting powerlessness to deal with the situation that started the crisis.

In the event of a crisis, there is always a perceived damage that is a result of the crisis, the justification strategy aims to minimize these perceptions (Coombs, 2007a). Improving an organizations reputation through provision of aid to crisis victims is an aim of the rebuild CRS. The crisis manager speaks and acts in manner to profit the stakeholders then subsequently takes positive steps to counterbalance the crisis (Coombs, 2007a). Reputational actions include giving compensation, or a full apology. Money or gifts may be offered by the manager during a crisis as a form of compensation to the victims (Zaremba, 2010). When an apology is offered it means

that the organization has taken responsibility for the crisis and goes ahead to seek forgiveness from the stakeholders (Coombs, 2007a).

The secondary crisis response strategies (CRS) are preferred as enhancements to the primary strategies and information adjustment and they consist of bolstering strategies (Coombs, 2007b). The previous positive relationships by managers come in handy to help protect an organizations reputation. Praising stakeholders for their determinations at the time of the crisis is a way of enhancing relationships with them alongside enticing for sympathy by being the ones affected by the crisis (Coombs, 2007b). When stakeholders are reminded of past deeds of an organization then the reminder strategy has been utilized. The praising of stakeholders and reminding them of the organizations good works is referred to as ingratiation. In some instances, the crisis manager makes the stakeholder remember that the organization is also a victim, this strategy is referred to as playing victim (Coombs, 2007a).

Organizations utilize CRS to lessen negative impacts, prevent negative behavior intentions and to mend the reputation. The conviction is that the accommodative strategies will be progressively viable at diminishing annoyance and the negative communications dynamic (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). A study by Varma (2011) focused on the CRS of Louisiana State University following the resignation of basketball coach for the women's team amidst indictments of indecent behavior with previous basketball players.

The study supported openness in communications and honesty coupled up with having a clear policy as a crisis communication strategy. The university attempted a situation where both the coach and the school win, but the absence of transparency in the preliminary phases of the crisis ascertained to be a hindrance for

them (Varma, 2011). This study utilized Coomb's (2007b) crisis response strategies as outlined in SCCT to identify strategies utilized by Daystar University during the 2018/2018 crisis.

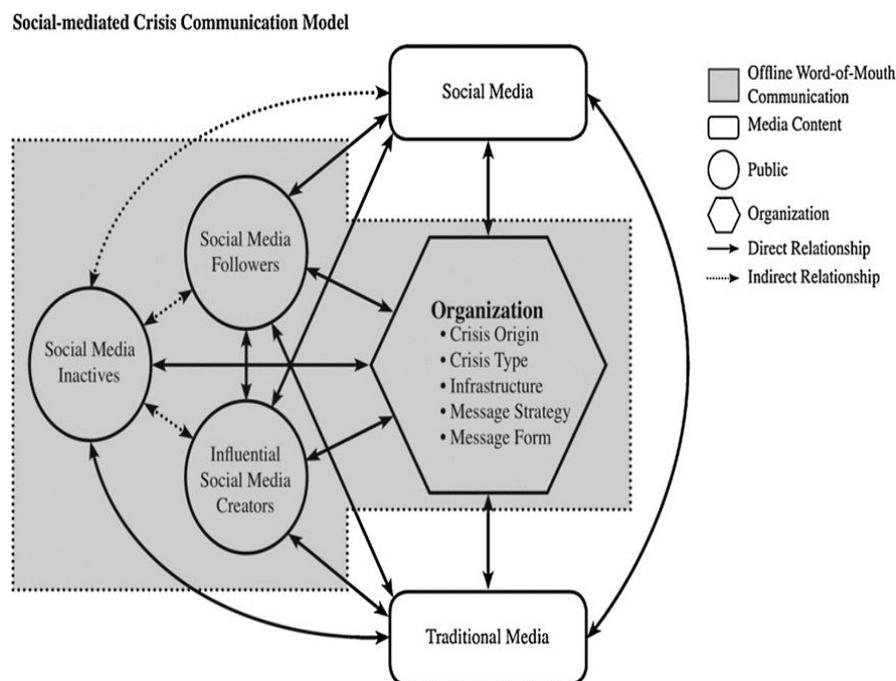
#### Social Mediated Crisis Model (SMCM)

Social media are viewed as the channels that make delivery of crisis responses more complex (Coombs, 2012), these channels and their complexities are however not included in the SCCT. The social mediated crisis model (SMCM) has however been developed as an expansion of SCCT to incorporate the facet of social media. SMCM was developed because there was a need to manage crises properly in the era of digital media (Jin & Liu, 2010). The theory posits that during, before and after a crisis there exist three kinds of publics that generate and consume information on social media. These kinds of publics include content creators who are made up of people who generate content that is accessed by other users, followers who follow the content from creators and have access to this information that has been put out and the in-actives that have no direct access to information from social media, they however come into contact with the information indirectly or seek it from other sources (Jin & Liu, 2010).

For this study, the kinds of publics that produced and consumed the information were the Daystar University Student Association (DUSA) who were the content creators alongside other Daystar University students who shared their experiences on the unrest on social media platforms they are subscribed to. The social media followers are the users who followed the hashtags used and they include

individuals like donors, parents, and school alumni. Finally, the social media in actives who include students and parents who are not active on social media.

The SMCM describes the communication between the publics and the organization during a crisis, the managers must recognize that the source of information and its form have an impact on individuals' levels of acceptance to different crisis response. The model also explains the process of information dissemination by social media (Austin, Liu, & Jin, 2012). For instance, information on crisis is conveyed straightforwardly from content creators who are influential to social media followers, but indirectly from influential social media followers to social media in actives.



*Figure 2.1: Social Mediated Crisis Model*  
Source: Jin and Liu, (2010).

Jin and Liu (2010) asserted that if distributed via social media messages tend to garner a different kind of attention from people, as opposed to the message being disseminated via traditional media, therefore the channel of distribution matters. The strategy incorporated when communicating via social media platforms should not be similar to those that are used with traditional media.

The model comes in handy when defining the population that faces the most risk and the most appropriate way to reach them with communication in emergency situations (Austin, Liu, & Jin, 2014). In a world progressively linked by social media, the information traded on these sites for the duration of crises is likely to interact with numerous kinds of public audiences. CRS in SMCM model range from defensive strategies to accommodative strategies which stress on repair of image (Austin et al., 2014). It was established by Austin et al. (2014) that if a crisis began internally, the public was more likely to accept accommodative crisis response strategies. However, if the crisis began externally the defensive response strategies were well received from the public (Jin et al., 2014). The theory provides the audience characteristics model to assist in refining communication components and strategies.

The SMCM backs up SCCT in this study as it bridges the gap that exist in the SCCT which does not discuss the social media publics in the event of a crisis. The SCCT was applicable to this study as it offers a structure for the response strategies the university may have chosen vis a vis the reputational threat of the crisis. For Daystar, the students accused the administration of mismanagement and a decline in education quality among others and demanded resignation of the acting vice chancellor. The students held the university accountable for the crisis.

The SCCT provided the ideal strategy that the university may have employed and the SMCMM provided a rationale for the usage of those strategies on the social media sites in regard to the publics tangled up in the crisis situation. It is crucial that during a crisis, the crisis manager works towards protecting organizational reputation. Coombs (2007b) stated that CRS have three purposes relative to protecting reputations: First, to form attributions of the crisis; second, to alter organizations' views; and third, to lessen the bad results caused by the crisis. The reputation of Daystar University was in the hand of the stakeholders who are the students; they actively tweeted about the crisis. The university response to the student's claims is an indication of their perception about the university.

## General Literature Review

### Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is the information that is traded before, during and after a crisis amongst different stakeholders including, those affected by the crisis, media, public authorities, and organizations (Coombs, 2012). When a crisis occurs, there comes an urgency by stakeholders to be updated on what is going on in the organization and what they are doing about it. Therefore, organizations take it upon themselves to ensure that their stakeholders are dully communicated to on whatever transpires. The communication might however be difficult for some communication managers.

Gregory (2008) noted that in the event of a crisis communicating becomes rather difficult, organizations are forced to act in haste and agree on the messages to convey within the organization and outside the organization. The aim of

communicating at these times is restoring legitimacy and ensuring that a company does not lose in instances where the stakeholders are holding judgement. How an organization communicates about a crisis determines whether they lose or gain their legitimacy (Zaremba, 2010). Information about the crisis is often sent out to the stakeholders through different communication channels. Villines (2011) stated that in public relations, crisis communication is vital as it holds great value in determining an organizations failure or success, with the public and economically.

A crisis may escalate for the worse when stakeholders are left in the dark during a crisis. This is because they may make assumptions based on hearsay from untrustworthy sources. Since crisis is the force that drives urgency, crisis managers are expected to communicate effectively with their stakeholders. Effective crisis communications entails giving individuals information about the crisis costs and benefits of the decisions they face (Kari, 2008). It also includes presenting information from credible sources to recipients with an aim of de-escalating a crisis and thus plummeting the physical and intangible effects of a crisis (Stamsnijder, 2002).

Coombs (2007a) noted that effective crisis communication averts or reduces the undesirable consequences of a crisis and protects the organization, its stakeholders, and the industry from disruptions from routine (Coombs, 2007a). Without effective crisis communication, the reputation of an organization is at risk (Holmes, 2011). Stakeholders can affect an organization and vice versa, this forms the base for the definition or reputation by Mitchell et al. (2007), they defined reputation as a perception of an organization formed by its stakeholders. This is like Fombrum (1996) definition who stated that the status of a company among its external

stakeholders and employees compared to its rivals is representative of corporate reputation.

When stakeholders say negative things about an organization they were affiliated with before a crisis then it could indicate a damaged reputation. The reputation can however be repaired through effective crisis communication; the communication should extend even past the crisis (Coombs (2007). Since crisis communication drives urgency, the way information is channeled through an organization turn out to be more complex (Ulmer, 2001). Communication sent out during a crisis ought to be truthful, consistent, and empathetic because this can alter a crisis (Gregory, 2008). According to Sellnow and Vidoloff (2009), in crisis communication truth prevails. It requires that truthful information be disseminated immediately and to important stakeholders in simple and comprehensible messages (Falkenheimer & Heide, 2006).

During a crisis, organizational culture, and structure impact the utilization of crisis messages (Deverell & Olsson, 2010). Organizational culture is a significant aspect in the organization's capacity to distinguish a crisis and communicate with partners and media and decipher information (Jia-Wang, Hutchins, & Garavan, 2008). Leadership is vital in giving focus, overview, uniting employees, and driving the organization out of crisis (Ulmer et al., 2011). Further, Evans, O'Malley, and Robertson (2001) established that organizational management is regularly hesitant to talk about serious issues with employees because they dread loss of inspiration, which might influence quality of their work.

The management subsequently needs to respond and react rapidly; information must be successfully managed and given out simultaneously to all affected parties, to

encourage the sustainability of its credibility (Nikolaev, 2010). When managing a crisis, organizations must create, early, an emergency crisis communication strategy and make plans, in view of this strategy, that consider the likelihood and seriousness of the dangers related with every crisis (Reich, Bentman, & Jackman, 2011). They should get comfortable with or come up with their own messages, work practices, strategies, and tools for managing with crisis communication to satisfy their responsibility in the effort of encouraging preparation and minimizing death and alternative harm. Coombs (2007) supported this by asserting by arguing that crisis communication focuses on doing everything to shield stakeholders from damage of any kind. Taylor (2010) included internal factors, for example, organizational culture and climate among others impact the messages of public relations more than a communication specialists' skills.

Crisis communication happens through pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis stages (Coombs, 2012). Crisis response, which is considered the most basic, yet significant stage of a crisis is tremendously noticeable to stakeholders and impacts stakeholders' opinions of how the organization is taking care of the crisis. Improper crisis responses can irritate a crisis (Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2005).

Novel communication innovations have significantly changed information and communication transmission during a crisis (Pancic, 2010). News concerning crises can exclusively be swiftly spread around the world, however organizations can likewise utilize the new technologies furthering their potential benefit to communicate with stakeholders and get the organization's message across (Caldiero, Taylor, & Ungureanu, 2010). Traditional press releases, Electronic mail, documents on Webs, videos, audios and Web-based commentary and analysis can be utilized by

organizations for information dissemination during a crisis. Blogging, for example, makes various communication possibilities for organizations and stakeholders (Caldiero et al., 2010). During a crisis, the need of implementing an effective communication strategy heightens at all levels in the organization. They further affirmed that crisis strategies regularly fail since management neglects to communicate the vital changes and set up their staffs appropriately (Evans et al., 2001).

### Social Media

Communication for stakeholder management have rapidly changed because of the development of social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This has prompted most organizations to integrate social media in the communication strategies of their organizations. Sinclair and Vogus (2011) described social media as the software tools that develop user created content that can be shared. The web-based social networking sites permits users to unite by producing individual information profiles and welcoming friends to access those profiles. The environment in which social media exists as indicated by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) has modified the manner in which customers acquire information and settle on purchasing decisions.

Social media also facilitates customer service functions such as checking account records, following orders, answering questions and dealing with client complaints, besides enabling organizations to relate with consumers in a more profound and progressively significant way (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Other than depending solely on the messages from mass media, social media permits interactive strategies that are focused on two-way client relationships (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

The two way communication approach that social media exhibits makes organizations develop deeper consumer involvement and a sense of community surrounding a brand to make it an important part of the consumers conversations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Social media tools are used for collaboration, sharing and supporting people and businesses. Twitter and Facebook have empowered customers to communicate their emotions; about a product or service they purchased or come across. Such that the feedbacks help organizations to improve decisions on how to serve their customers and develop more informed solutions which increases customer loyalty (Dabner, 2012). Social media has also made it possible for organizations to communicate with their stakeholders directly without the help of journalist (Salminen, 2017).

This study looked at the most common social media sites, which are, Facebook and Twitter, and how organizations use them during a crisis. Facebook is a social networking site that enables individuals to connect and generate user generated content. Conceptualized in 2004, Facebook was designed to be used by college students, currently the application can be used by anyone above the age of thirteen. It is the world's largest social network with over one billion users globally. Whereas Twitter is a microblogging that allows individuals to send and receive tweets, the social networking site permits users to only use one hundred and forty characters per tweet.

Twitter has become a popular social media site among academics, students, policymaker, politicians and even organizations. The study investigated the social media networking platform, Facebook, and Twitter, which were most actively used by the students during the student's unrest. During the Daystar University Student's

unrest, the students took to Twitter to relay their grievances under the hashtag's #DaystarLivesMatter #DaystarExposed and #DaystarUniversityRot.

### Social Media Strategies

Individuals and organizations often assume that a social media strategy is being present on social media, using it to sell and advertise products and services. This is however not the case, according to Crawley (2018) social media strategy is a fundamental aspect of a communication strategy. It is a well thought out goals and actions that involves time and budget by an organization. A well-thought out social media strategy that is incorporated throughout the entire company can afford organizations with comprehensive, immediate feedback from clients and significant information on markets. A great social media strategy is a totally incorporated communication plan that fortifies the effect of each function inside the organization by utilizing the power of human systems through social networking platforms.

Owyang and Lovett (2010) stressed on the need for organizations to develop an across-the-board social media strategy to abstain from faltering and devoured by internet-based life. Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016) found out that social media usage by firms on Facebook, identify six social media strategies. The six namely Egocentric, Openness, Selective, Supportive, Conversational and Secretive. Each of the six strategies adheres to different principles, especially in crisis management. For instance, Egocentric strategy allows companies and institutions to show their strength regardless of the crisis at hand (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016).

Organizations that adhere to this strategy are bound to share information with their stakeholders through social media but will at no point engage in conversation

with them. As the term suggests, it is an approach that tries to bear superiority over others regardless of the situation at hand. In a crisis an organization that adopts this strategy will only distribute information on the crisis to their social media platforms but will not respond to any claims from people online (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). For example, if company A is accused of selling fake products and it adopts the egocentric strategy, management will give information claiming that even though the products are not originals, they are still the best in the market. It is imperative to note that the egocentric strategy is rigid, therefore, the principles given can be used in any crisis.

Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016) identified another strategy as conversational that creates an intimate relationship and dialogue with stakeholders. Organizations that adopt this strategy often reply to all remarks shared by customers to launch a dialogue and deal with any conflict. This strategy assists in quickly countering claims that are made online and can help in preventing a crisis from escalating (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). The selective strategy aims at filtering only the good things said about an organization. Organizations that adopt to this strategy often ignore any negative feedback from their customers. The organizations give focus only to customers who support their brand and respond to the positive comments (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016).

Openness strategy allows organizations to use specific details of a crisis to resolve it. The strategy employs the approach of enhancing the transparency of organization and stakeholder dialogues (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). During a crisis, openness and transparency is always advocated for organization to use by further responding publicly to comments shared by their stakeholders. The supportive

strategy, on the other hand, aims at conveying information regarding offers and quotes and assisting customers throughout all phases of the purchase process. The secretive communications strategy proposes managing crisis via private channel away from the public eye (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). The organization in this case may choose not to directly respond to a comment made on Facebook, they may decide to reply through another channel like email or even giving the customer a call to resolve the conflict.

### Social Media and Crisis Communication

Arguably social media has altered communication amongst individuals and how they interrelate and share information (Lindsay, 2011). When organizations communicate via social media it means that they aim at reaching their stakeholders quickly and efficiently (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). The ability of social media to provide instantaneous news has made it a vital information source (Coombs, 2010). Moreover, Wang and Dong (2017) indicated that social media provides opportunities as well as challenges in case of a crisis because of their rapid development.

The real time reaction that social media encourages has resulted in the platforms being utilized during crises globally (Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016). The two-way communication, that it embraces allows for organizations to sieve out the main concerns of their stakeholders during a crisis, and address them accordingly (Jiang et al., 2016). Despite being used as means of communicating crises, social media can similarly be utilized in detecting matters which have turned out to be crises (Baron & Philbin, 2009). In addition to helping organizations identify prodromes, the channel has been observed as a risk to organizations crisis communications because of its ability to spread half-truths quickly (Holmes, 2011).

The ever-present social networking community contributed to the likelihood of a corporate crisis being reported within a short span by concerned persons through social media (Argenti, 2013). Further, this news will be picked up by bloggers and traditional media. Opinions of stakeholders may also be swayed by a simple tweet especially from an influencer, companies should therefore purpose to directly interact with their stakeholders and this can be facilitated by their presence on social media (Argenti, 2013). Social media utilization alongside the traditional crisis communication strategies has allowed for better managing of crisis (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). Throughout a crisis, organizations can utilize social media to disseminate messages via the sites and reach millions, and this is without journalists help (Salminen, 2017).

During a crisis for instance, organizations, could use the rebuild CRS to improve the reputation of an organization by offering support to the victims. These messages could be posted online through Facebook and Twitter and response offered to those affected through the same channel. Wang and Dong (2017) stated that at the time of a crisis, trustworthy reporting of crises through social media is what most of the publics seek out for. This demand has created new challenges for crisis managers dealing with issues emanating from online platforms. Daystar University students, for instance, at the time of the unrest went on to social media to relay their grievances and hoped that the situation will be addressed through the same channels that they had relayed the grievances. To avert this situation, the university could have identified brand influencers to help in the situation.

Identification of bloggers before a crisis is recommended by Veil et al. (2011) as they serve as allies during a crisis. Austin and Jin (2017) acknowledged that organization crisis may be brought forth by a mismanaged or ill planned social media campaign or messages that harms the organizations. Social media aid in the transmission of damaging rumors, sharing of negative opinions and accumulation of negative emotions regarding an organization. Crisis managers have been forced to join the social media bandwagon to relay clarifications on misinformation shared.

The vitality of messages put out during a crisis is affirmed by their ability in lessening the loss and effects of a crisis on an organization besides being information for those affected by the predicament (Fediuk, Coombs, & Botero, 2010). Message framing is particularly vital when repairing and protecting an organizations reputation (Druckman, 2001; Cooper, 2002; Freberg et al., 2013). When a communicator chooses aspects to emphasize it is known as framing. Individuals who receive the messages will pay attention to those aspects when making judgements and forming opinions. Hence, the need by communicators to develop messages that seize the attention to either the good side or to the minor complications triggered by the crisis (Salminen, 2017).

The channel utilized for messaging might be equivalent, or even more significant than the message (Jin & Liu, 2010; Schultz, Utz, & Goritz, 2011). For instance, Twitter users have been observed to distribute information more often than bloggers and non-users of social media (Schultz et al., 2011). Twitter has been stated to be the most appropriate platform to use during a crisis as it provides the faster responses and enables feedback (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). Organization should focus

on a medium that is more likely to ensure a message is passed on to most stakeholders.

Schultz et al. (2011) study implied that Twitter is more applicable in diminishing undesirable crisis responses for instance boycotting and negative word-of-mouth. In Norway for instance, social media was actively utilized during and after the 'Oslo and Utoya' attacks in July 2011. The two attacks happened on 22<sup>nd</sup> day of July. The bomb attacks in Oslo killed eight people and left 90 injures, buildings near the bomb blasts were severely damaged. The same afternoon in Utoya, a summer camp with a youth organization was attacked by a man donning police attire. The man shot 69 people and injured 65 (Liselotte, Per-Olof, Louis, & Per, 2012), Twitter was mainly used by eyewitnesses and victims during the shooting. Relatives searching for their loved ones also used the platform to look for them (Liselotte et al., 2012).

A study conducted by Vistbacka (2017) aimed at coming up with insights on social media as a crisis communication channel. The study found out that majority of the organizations under study still used one-way communication on the social media platforms, despite them having an opportunity to have real discussions on the platforms. The study, however, does not incorporate different features on how to utilize the various platforms when managing a crisis. Another study by Hardell-Illgen (2015) investigated communication of crisis via social media established that when an organization discloses a crisis message, the negative impacts brought on by the crisis on attitude and brand reputation are lessened. This shows the essential aspect of messages as a dominant factor in managing crises (Agnes, 2012). Furthermore, the study established that brand-disclosure is more satisfactory, if the crisis is as a result of values and ethics of the brand, as opposed to if product failure was the reason for

the crisis. This study showcases the importance of an organization relaying crisis messages to its publics during a crisis.

### Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is a valued intangible asset for organizations however it is progressively proving hard to manage in an age with hard-to-control on-line discussions (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015). Reputation is the degree to which an organization is viewed as legitimate. Reputation is established and occurs before any crisis and tarnished or strengthened based on the crisis communication activity and the crisis (Zaremba, 2010). The ability possessed by an organization to meet the needs of their stakeholders is what makes corporate reputation (Coombs, 2012). Corporate reputation is based on a stakeholder's reflection of the organization over time and is seemingly expressed through their thoughts and words (Belasen, 2008). From the definitions, reputation is solely from the stakeholders' point of view.

Often, corporate image is often mistaken for corporate reputation. It is however important to distinguish the two, corporate image is the immediate mental picture that a person conceives when an organization is mentioned (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001). The alignment of an organizations image and identity means that the reputation has a firm foundation (Argenti, 2013). A variety of factor affect reputation, these factors range from employee treatment, organizations handling of ethical issues, the financial performance of an organization, innovativeness, and its commitment to the environment (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008).

An organizations reputation can be affected negatively by employees if the values and messages they perceive are not in line with what the organization is

portraying to their external stakeholders. The strength of an organization's reputation is determined by how they manage their communication with their stakeholders (Argenti, 2013). For organizations, a satisfactory corporate reputation is imperative as it can safeguard it when a crisis occurs (Shamma, 2012). Positive reputation also comes in handy for organizations as consumers have been observed to select them when it comes to paying and purchasing their products (Graham & Moore, 2007). The adoption of a proactive strategy by an organization for the media and consumers has enabled positive reputation for such organizations (Belasen, 2008).

A good reputation when maintained allows a company to be differentiated in a saturated market. Corporate reputation encompasses an organizations communication strategies, products, and activities that transverse with marketing and management communication fields. Williams, Buttle, and Biggemann (2012) added that the things a company does not say does not make or did not do also influences corporate reputation. Reputation takes years to build but it can be easily destroyed, rebuilding also takes a significant time. It is therefore vital for an organization's reputation to be protected (Dolphin, 2004).

#### Social Media and Corporate Reputation

Social media gives an organization the chance to gather candid opinions from individuals online and at a low cost (Dellarocas, 2003). The organization can monitor their image and reputation status. Social media is ideal for creating the preferred image and reputation of an organization because of its capacity of building relationships that are interactive with an infinite number of receivers, oscillating from customers to stakeholders among others (Etter, 2013; Yang & Lim, 2009). Due to its

ability to increase interactivity, worldwide reach and speed social media may provide prospects and threats for building and protecting reputation (Szwajca, 2017).

One of the advantages of utilizing new media in reputation building is its ability to facilitate close relationships with target groups, these group compels an organization to be transparent and open during dialogues as that offers a chance to gain stakeholder trust, because the sites have become trusted (Szwajca, 2017). However, social media function is beyond the organizations control and influence (Li & Bernoff, 2011). This characteristic of social media generates serious threats to organizational reputation. The number of potential crisis scenarios emanating from social media have increased significantly over the years (Quesada, 2017). Information about organizations that has been put up on social media has been attributed to shaping customers perceptions and opinions about it (Bunting & Lipski, 2000; Goetzinger, Park, & Widdows, 2006; Gorry & Westbrook, 2009).

The reputation of the organization online can be damaged by an unhappy customer, who for instance is dissatisfied by the services of a company. A case in point is what the United Airlines faced in the “United Breaks Guitars” case (Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). The company did not properly assist a client whose guitar had been broken while on board. The passenger from his frustrations recorded a song on the predicament and shared it on social media. The song surpassed 10 million views on the platform YouTube. The song did not only cost the airline a bad reputation, it resulted in a decrease in valuation of the airline to a tune of 180 million dollars. This is evidence of the power of social media on organizations reputation.

Bunting and Lipski (2000) stated that stakeholders’ perceptions and opinions influences the organizational reputation. Gorry and Westbrook (2009) believed that

comments from outspoken customers that are not picked upon by organization are missed chances by organizations to solidify stakeholder loyalty and improve market performance. As a result, there could be disturbances on corporate reputation and eventual economic loss as in the case of United Airlines. Therefore, companies should not ignore social media, they should embrace it as a tool for building and reputation protection besides it being a marketing channel (Szwajca, 2017). Further, Aula (2010) noted that social media are not a one-way communication channel, they are arenas where individuals can participate uncontrolled and this is likely damage reputation.

Despite being an avenue for crisis fueling social media can be utilized to make public and organizations brand and improve its reputation (Warin, Nathalie, Sanger, Nembot, & Mirza, 2013). Management of reputation involves dealing with organization and stakeholders' relationship (Ryschka et al., 2016). Any threat to the relationship between the two entities can result into a damaged reputation. Reputational trouble can take various forms, sources, and publics. Greyser (2009) stated that the most serious scenarios are those that affect the distinctive characteristic. In the quest to create good relationships with consumers, organizations need to add social media to their strategies to engage in online discussions (Burson-Marsteller, 2012). Social media have also become necessary for organizations as they offer opportunities for growth (Argenti, 2013).

#### Empirical Literature Review

Since crises have the potential of damaging the reputation of organizations (Kiambi & Shafer, 2015), it is vital that they are properly managed when they occur. The past decade has witnessed the evolution of research in the area of corporate

reputation with the acceptance of social media as a popular channel of communication in the analysis of crises. Particular attention has been given on how social media affects corporate reputation, roles of social media in reputation management, the opportunities and challenges that come along with it, social media crisis management and crisis communication have been documented worldwide (Dijkmans et al., 2015; Gathu, 2016; Ryschka et al., 2016; Szwajca, 2017). For instance, the study by Szwajca (2017) in Poland focused on establishing the role of social media in corporate reputation management. Szwajca found out that social media was preferred by Polish companies for marketing purposes. The organizations in Poland treated social media as a publicity tool utilized by the marketing and public relations departments. The organizations did not show any sufficient activity in using SNS as tool of reputation management.

A similar study by Gathu (2016) was conducted in Kenya focusing on social media's role in reputation management, the single case study was carried out on G4S Kenya Limited. The study found out that social media improved reputation management at the organization through effective information management and stakeholder involvement. The researcher further concluded that if used effectively social media is more credible for information dissemination than traditional media. Moreover, Dijkmans et. al, (2015) carried out a study to investigate whether the online activities that aim at engaging consumers are important for corporate reputation. The study which focused on the airline industry and collected data from 3531 participants in Netherlands. Dijkmans, Kerkhof and Beukeboom found out that consumers' engagement through online activities, usually has an impact on corporate reputation of the company, especially among the non-consumers.

Grutzmacher (2011), found out that individuals who utilized Nokia's platforms online evaluated the corporation's social media participation better than non-users. The study also found out that neither participation by Nokia on Social media nor their cognizance of the organizations participation appeared to be sufficient to persuade respondents to rate Nokia's reputation positively. Grutzmacher who conducted the study in the corporation Nokia (Finland), endeavored to establish the role of social media on corporate reputation. The study utilized a single case approach, with the use of qualitative and quantitative data.

In Africa, a study by Kimotho and Nyarang'o (2019) concentrated on social media's role in risk and crisis communication. It used the case of Westgate terror attack in September 2013. The study found out that to protect its reputation the Interior ministry through social media used defensive strategies. The strategies they used include excuse and victimage to respond to the terror attack. Another study by Ochich (2015) focused on social media's role in terrorism crisis communication, the findings indicated that social media broadened the reach of messages put out by authorities and the public. It also concluded that social media compels authorities to make public messages as the media and the public share their position and experiences.

Several studies focusing on social media and corporate reputation have been conducted globally. Szwajca (2017) for instance researched on social media's role in corporate reputation management among Polish enterprises. Data was gathered through critical literature review and analysis of secondary sources in a form of research reports conducted by various science and research centers. The study concluded the organizations did not monitor social for information about them,

neither did they use the platforms to respond to potential attacks, which resulted in the inability to efficiently protect their reputations. From the study, it further concluded that most organizations in Poland, utilized Facebook and YouTube, but gave a blind eye on alternative social media platforms. The conclusions were drawn from secondary data collected, thus left a gap for conclusions made from primary data which this study utilized.

Modeus et al. (2012) examined crisis management on social media and concluded that organizations need to have a crisis plan, so as to be strengthened or not affected by a crisis. The mixed method study was aimed at measuring successful management of crisis on social media and identify the disparities between smaller and larger companies. The main data was from an online survey. Two qualitative interviews and secondary quantitative data were used. The findings revealed that organizations should consider monitoring social media so as to give responses quickly to any crisis that may be upcoming. The study found out that problems can emanate from managing a crisis on social media if it is not properly handled.

Ryschka et.al., (2016) evaluated the role of social media shaping the perceptions of reputation during crisis management. The study focused on the cruise line industry. The research applied an experimental research design. The data collected from United States and Germany sought to determine how several factors for instance, speed and clarity of response by corporate, cultural values and brand familiarity influence the perception of corporate reputation of a cruise line experiencing a crisis. Findings revealed the factors indeed affected perceptions of corporate reputation of a cruise line after a crisis. The research, however, was based

on a fictional crisis and the researcher sought to find out if the results are the same in the event of a real crisis.

A study conducted by Cheng (2016) investigated social media and how it has altered crisis communication strategies with data from revised literature. Eleven journals were reviewed for this study. Crises and CCS in the Social Mediated Crisis Management affirmed that indeed social media was altering traditional CCS. It proposed that liberated stakeholders on social media be given more attention. The ICC model used in the study accentuated the significance of measuring stakeholders in the crisis. further the model recommends stakeholder monitoring, analysis and understanding of their needs and wants in crises is the first step before making any decisions of crisis response. Crisis communication strategies have been applied in different scenarios and studies done to check on their effectiveness. For instance, many scholars apply Benoit's image repair theory in different crises.

King (2006) looked at Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company and their adoption of multiple response strategies following the whistle-blowing incident. Caldiero et al. (2010) investigated fraud and mismanagement crises. They established that that corrective action and bolstering were the most used CRS by organizations. All these cases were in the US and there is a need to establish the same for African countries. Kim, Avery, and Lariscy (2009) broke down public relations research from 1991 to 2009, utilizing the system of Benoit's (1997) Image Restoration Theory and Coombs' (2007) SCCT.

Kim et al. (2009) examination shows that most of the time CRS utilized by organizations were bolstering (58.8%), denial (56.9%), mortification (45.1%), attack-the-accuser (36.7%), and shifting-the-blame (34.7%). They saw that the best crisis

strategies were full apology (71.4%), mortification (52.4%), corrective action (52.2%), and bolstering (50%). The least successful, was denial although it was the most often used strategy. Most of the crises were preventable crisis (53%), accident (31%), and victim (20%). Their examination demonstrates that specialists do not consider counsel created by scholarly research (Sterne, 2008).

Findings exhort that a gap between crisis communication practice and scholarly studies exists. For example, denial strategy, which overlooks the sufferers of a crisis, is helpful if the organization is not liable for a crisis (Coombs, 1999). Further, Lee's (2004) investigation of strategies utilized by organizations in Hong Kong showed that the most used strategies were minimization, no comment, compensation, blame shifting, apology and corrective action in no order. This indicates solid likeness, aside from the no comment strategy as documented in (Kim et al., 2009).

With culture as a significant determinant in crisis communication, investigations by Haruta and Hallahan (2003) of two aircraft crashes USA and Japan found that the two companies responded quite differently in similar incidents. Their discoveries demonstrate that cultures play a vital role in the manner that organizations answer to crises. For instance, while mortification is frequently a final retreat strategy in the United States crisis in their communiqué, Japan Air Line lead offered apologies to the families affected by the crash quickly, which was expected by the Japanese. It was viewed as a method for communicating distress during the episode. The apology is a fundamental social step in this cultural context (Haruta & Hallahan, 2003).

In an investigation by Huang (2008), response was determined as an increasingly significant factor in relational commitment and stakeholder trust as opposed to the crisis communication strategy. Hale et al. (2005), on the other hand,

concluded that when information is distributed rapidly, precisely, straightforwardly, and honestly to important stakeholder's crisis management was more successful. From the literature, it is apparent that discussions by researchers around crisis management and social media seldom touch on the impact crisis management on social media has on the reputation of an organization.

### Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a structure which the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied (Camp, 2001). The independent variable is the one a researcher has control over, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) the researcher does this to see its impact on the dependent variable. The variable that exists because of the independent variable and shows the effect resulting from the effects of independent variables is the dependent variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The two variables are connected in the framework below.

The conceptual framework of this study identifies social media communication strategies as the independent variables and perception on corporate reputation will be the dependent variable. It focused on crisis and post-crisis communication. The SCCT and the SMCM served as the intervening variables. The conceptual framework in figure 2.1 illustrates the connection between social media strategies as independent variables, crisis response strategies, SCCT, and SMCM as intervening variables and the dependent variable of perceived corporate reputation.

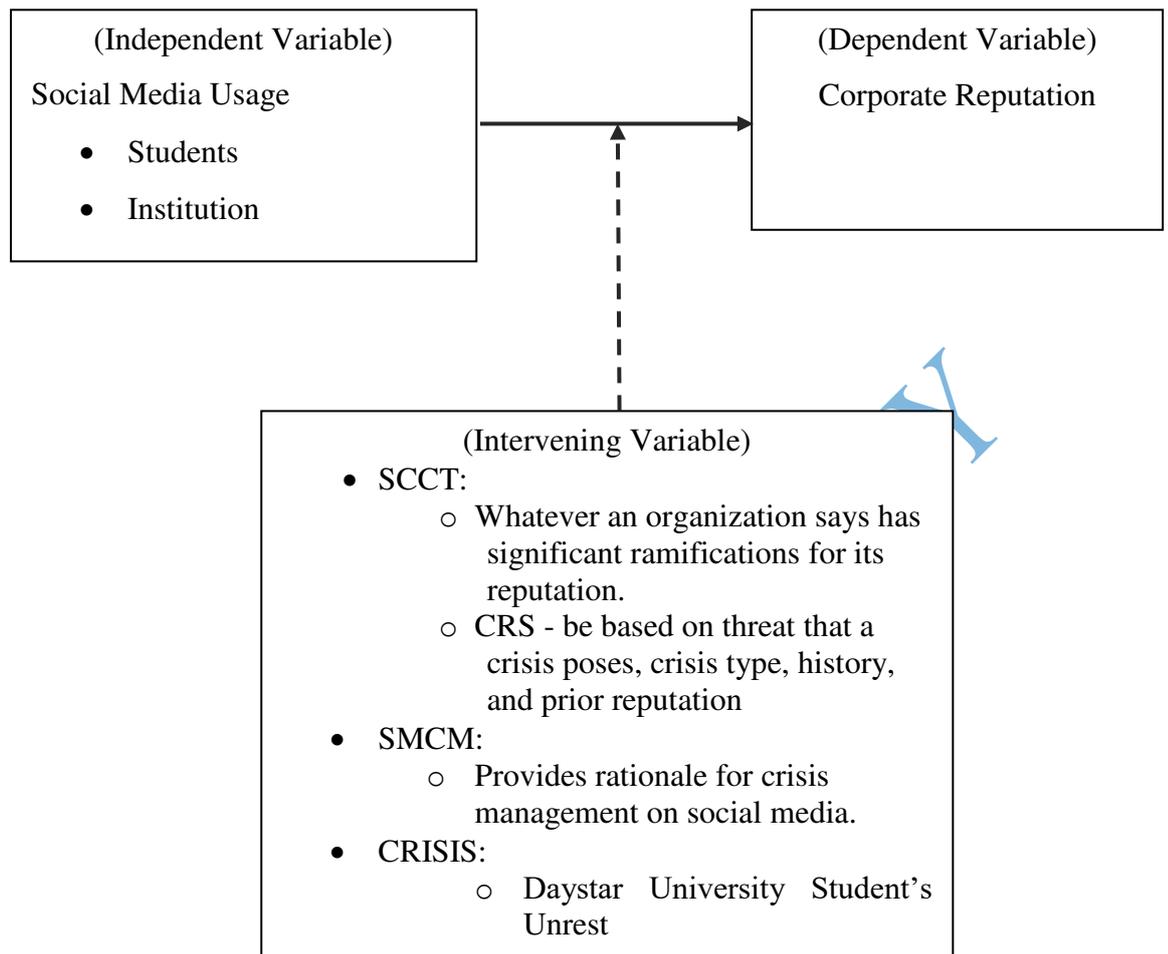


Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework  
Source: Author, (2020)

## Discussion

In the study, the independent variable was social media because to a greater extent, it influences how stakeholders perceive the corporate reputation of an organization. Seemingly, it exists independent of crisis and corporate reputation. The researcher holds the view that social media draws the stakeholders towards Daystar University thus having an implication on corporate reputation, their attitudes, and opinions. Both negative and positive reputation trickle down to what is posted online about the organization and how they handle the comments and posts on social media, hence Corporate reputation was the dependent variable.

Corporate reputation is established and occurs before any crisis and is tarnished or strengthened based on the crisis communication activity and the crisis hence, the crisis acts as an intervening variable in the study. Corporate reputation is the result of an organizations ability to meet their stakeholders needs. The intervening variables were the SCCT, crisis and the SMCM. The researcher holds the view that a crisis that occurs on social media influences the corporate reputation of an organization. During a crisis, an organization strives to protect themselves against reputational threats, in doing so they use the proposed response strategies in the SCCT to ensure that they communicate effectively. This is because during a crisis, most stakeholders value communication from an organization.

The SCCT was applicable to this study as it offers a structure for the response strategies the university may have chosen vis a vis the reputational threat of the crisis. In the social media environment, where crisis have been seen to accelerate the response strategies can be used concurrently with the strategies to ensure that no harm is caused to the reputation with guidance from SMCM and SCCT. Crisis is also an intervening variable and affects both the independent and the dependent variable. The study results indicate that SM usage during the crisis has the potential of ruining an organizations reputation. This is because the negative information shared online reaches a plethora of individual who eventually form perceptions based on the allegations. Hence the need of protecting reputation during a crisis.

### Summary

Chapter two has discussed the theoretical frameworks, the SCCT and the SMCM, the general literature review where corporate reputation and various

dimensions of social media strategies were addressed in crisis situations. Empirical literature review has been highlighted in this chapter to show the relationship between social media usage for crisis communication and their impact on corporate reputation. The studies majorly focused on social media platforms and there was a deficit of studies specifically focusing on specific social media strategies. This study sought to bridge the gap. A conceptual framework is also discussed to show the relationship between the variables.

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Methodology is defined as merely an operational framework within which the data are placed so that their meaning may be seen more clearly (Creswell, 2009). Research methodology guided in determining the procedures for collection of data and analysis. Chapter three discusses the research procedure and approach that were used for the study. The appropriateness of research design, the selection of the study population and study sample were described. The methods of research were agreed upon after a conclusive statement of the problem. The techniques that were used for gathering data were discussed. Finally, when the data was collected, designated data processing and analysis methods were applied.

#### Research Design

The structure that determines how a research is conducted is known as research design it comprises the outline for collecting, evaluating and data exploration (Kothari, 2004). A research design articulates needed data, methodology for gathering and evaluating the data and the structure of how research questions were responded to. A descriptive survey research design employing both quantitative data and qualitative data was adopted for this study. Descriptive research gives an account of the situation as it is (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive research aids in identifying the features of a group in a given situation, it assists in giving logical thinking about characteristic of a given situation. In addition, this design is ideal in investigating the process of communication amongst investors and collecting details about opinions of

stakeholders which are hard to measure (Horster & Gottschalk, 2012). This type of study further offered the research to arrive at simple conclusions. The design was considered suitable for this study because it provided a precise and valid representation of the variables that are pertinent to the questions for this research. Furthermore, it was suitable for identifying and obtaining information on characteristic of an issue for instance a community.

### Population

When conducting research, the items that exist in the field of research are known as population. Population is outlined by Cooper and Schindler (2008) as total elements upon which a scholar desires to make interpretations. Population defined by Sekaran and Bougie (2011) is the total group of people, happenings or things of common observable characteristics which differentiate it from other populations which are under investigation. It is the group that a researcher is interested in answering a question. The population must be cautiously selected and defined so as to derive the best results. Different results were acquired when the population lacked characteristics of the study.

For this study, the population was all the students at both Nairobi and Athi River Campuses and all the staff members at Daystar University. A meeting with Daystar University's registrar revealed that the university had 3935 registered undergraduate students, 2200 of these students were based in Nairobi Campus and 1735 in Athi River campus, respectively. In addition, the university had registered a total of 613 students in their master's programs and 58 students in their PhD programs which are available at Nairobi Campus. An interview with the Human Resource

Manager revealed that the University had 280 staff in their campuses in Kenya (Daystar, 2019). Therefore, the population for this study was 4606 students and 280 University staff.

### Target Population

In research, the members of a group of interest is referred to as the target population (Privitera, 2017). It is a well-defined collection of individuals with similar characteristics within a larger population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). For this study, the target population was the 3935 undergraduate students from Daystar University and the 12 staff in the Corporate Affairs department. The researcher spoke to institution's registrar who stated as follows:

*There were 62 registered students in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, 700 students in the School of Business and Economics, 1461 students in the School of Communication 1038 students in the school of Humanities and Social Sciences and 674 students in the school of Science Engineering and Health.*

Further he stated as follows:

*The institution had a total of 12 staff members in the Corporate Affairs Department.*

The target population selected by the researcher for this study were the undergraduate students, this was because they were the initiators of the student's unrest in the University and they participated actively in the strike. The researcher further selected the Corporate Affairs Department as they oversee communication and corporate reputation of the university.

### Sample Size

A representation of the population is a sample. It is a percentage of the population under investigation (Privitera, 2017). Study of samples as opposed to the

whole population is efficient since they are economical and time conscious (Stringer, 2008). The overall regulation in research is to use the biggest sample to represent and make conclusions about the whole population (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Researchers are encouraged to use the largest possible sample size to reduce sampling error. The selection of a subset of cases to make conclusions about the entire set is referred to as sampling (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

For this study, the desired sample size was 120 students. The researcher settled on 120 because Hayes (2017) noted that in stratified random sampling a researcher can choose the sample size they desire and proceed to identifying samples from each stratum. The number 120 was ideal to the researcher because of time and funds available to conduct the data collection. The table below shows the sample size for the different schools. The desired sample size from the Corporate Affairs Department was 4.

#### Sampling Techniques

This study utilized stratified random sampling for selecting the respondents because the population was divided into homogenous units which are referred to as strata, these strata were the different schools the students were in. Stratified random sampling is performed independently within each stratum to identify a sample. This kind of sampling leads to more reliable and detailed information being achieved (Kothari, 2004).

The sample was dependent on stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is a random procedure where elements are chosen from the target population grounded on their suitability with the study's intended purpose (Daniel, 2012). The

stratified random sample involves dividing the population (N) into two or more strata. For this study, the population was divided into 5 strata (H) which are the different schools in the institution. For this sampling method, there was an equal chance that each female or male student could be selected for inclusion in each stratum of the study sample. This type of sampling according to Hayes and Westfall (2017) stipulates that the researcher can choose the sample size they desire and proceed to identifying samples from each stratum using the formula below:

$$\text{Sample size of stratum (H)} = \frac{\text{Size of entire sample}}{\text{Population size (N)}} \times \text{Desired Sample size}$$

Table 3.1: Distribution of Sample Per the School

School	Size of entire sample	Sample Size of stratum (H)
School of Arts and Social Sciences,	62	
School of Business and Economics,	700	
School of Communication	1461	
School of Humanities and Social Sciences	1038	
School of Science Engineering and Health	674	
Total (Population size)	3935	120 (Desired sample size)

The calculations below show how the researcher arrived at sample size for each stratum. Sample for the School of Arts and Social Sciences:

$$(H) = \frac{62}{3935 (N)} \times 120$$

$$\lfloor 1.89 \rfloor \sim 2$$

Sample for School of Business and Economics

$$(H) = \frac{700}{3935 (N)} \times 120$$

$$= 21.34 \sim 21$$

Sample for the School of Communication

$$(H) = \frac{1461}{3935 (N)} \times 120$$

$$= 44.55 \sim 45$$

Sample for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences

$$(H) = \frac{1038}{3935 (N)} \times 120$$

$$= 31.65 \sim 32$$

Sample for the School of Science Engineering and Health

$$(H) = \frac{674}{3935 (N)} \times 120$$

$$= 20.55 \sim 21$$

*Table 3.2: Sampling Technique as per the Various Schools*

School	Size of entire sample	Sample Size of stratum (H)
School of Arts and Social Sciences,	62	2
School of Business and Economics,	700	21
School of Communication	1461	45
School of Humanities and Social Sciences	1038	32
School of Science Engineering and Health	674	21
Total (Population size)	3935	120

The sample from the Corporate Affairs Department was based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling targets characteristics of a population that are of importance, which appropriately enables the researcher to resolve research questions.

In purposive sampling, subjects are hand-picked by the researcher because they are informative, and they hold the essential characteristics for the study. Members of the Corporate Affairs Department were selected using this sample as the researcher needed people who best served the purpose of the study. Each sample in purposive sampling was carefully chosen because of the distinctive position of the sample element, it involved studying the whole population of the same limited group or a subset that were conversant about the subject under study (Bryman, 2012). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) indicated that a sample of 10%-30% of the target population is enough for descriptive studies. Thus, from the Corporate Affairs Department, the researcher sampled 30% of the 12 staff members, which equaled to four staff members.

#### Data Collection Instruments

Data collection is gathering of data to tackle the questions being inquired upon in a study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). In data collection, there are two major approaches to help gather information, they include primary data and secondary data (Kumar, 2011). Information that was collected firsthand from the sources was primary data. Secondary data was the data gathered by someone else, but the researcher used it for purposes of the research. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data. A questionnaire is an arrangement of queries printed or typed in specific

order in one form or more (Chandran, 2004).120 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with the help of research assistants.

#### Data Collection Procedures

For the distribution of questionnaires to the undergraduate students the researcher trained three research assistants on the method the research would use to identify and administer the questionnaire to the target audience the research was aimed at collecting data from. Of the three researchers, two were assigned to collect data from Athi River Campus and one was assigned to Nairobi Campus. Athi River campus was assigned two research assistants since geographically the campus is bigger and the classrooms are scattered thus adding a challenge is distributing of the questionnaires. Further, the researcher and the research assistants worked hand in hand with school administrators from the five schools (the strata) in Athi River Campus who assisted in identifying the class schedules for fourth year students. The researcher purposively selected fourth year students because they were second year students during the crisis at the institution.

The timetable indicated the different buildings and rooms where the different courses were being lectured in. The researcher purposively selected the classes where data was to be collected. After the selection, the researcher and research assistants proceeded to the various classrooms and briefed the lecturer on the research, the researcher requested the lecturer to ask from the students if they were in the institution at the time of the crisis and requested them to remain behind after the lecture to participate in the research. To eliminate fear of victimization, the researcher did not disclose all the respondents' details to the lecturer who requested them to remain in

class in order to facilitate their participation in the data collection. It was only after the lecturer had left when the researcher assistants administered the questionnaire after giving a complete brief to the students on the purpose of the study and the confidentiality measures put in place to protect their identity. This was the procedure carried out during data collection in both campuses. The researcher before distribution of questionnaire interrogated the students to ascertain that indeed they experienced the strike before distribution the questionnaires. Only those that fit the criteria were selected in the research. The process was repeated until the researcher reached the sample for each stratum.

Only one research assistant was assigned to assist with data collection in Daystar University Nairobi Campus. The campus occupies a smaller surface area making it easier to navigate around and every school is located on a different floor on the institutions main building, making it easy to access. In Daystar University, Athi River Campus, the researcher worked with the school administrators to get the timetable and identify the classes with fourth year students. The researcher briefed the lecturers on the need to collect data and requested those that were in school during the strike to remain behind. After the lecture, the researcher distributed to the desired number of students according to the sample size per school. The data for this study was collected in October 2019.

Questionnaire was selected for this study because of its ability to collect significantly large quantities of data from respondents within a limited time and resources. They were also easy to administer, short and simple, cost effective and were regarded as highly confidential (Kothari, 2004). A pre-test was however

necessary in order to bring out any loopholes that the questionnaire may have had (Kothari, 2009).

In-depth interviews were ideal as the researcher's desired sample consisted of a very specific target population. The interviews were used to acquire information on the social media strategy used by the University during the crisis and how crisis communication was managed at the institution. The technique is advantageous as the researcher gets a good response rate and in-depth feedback (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The shortcoming of this method was that it was time consuming, could have been biased (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

#### Pretesting

Pretesting is carried out to check that questions work as intended and are understood by those individuals who are likely to respond to them (Drennan, 2003). Five respondents were selected from the university to assist in the pretesting of the questionnaire. The individuals for the pretest were selected purposely by the researcher from Postgraduate communication students as they were not part of the sample for the study. The responses from the pretest aided the researcher in adjusting the questionnaire before the actual study.

The reason the five postgraduate students were purposively selected from a group of the researchers' course mates for the pretest was that they were part of Daystar University population, they experienced and were affected by the 2017/2018 crisis. The postgraduate students were not part of the target population of the study. The pretest also assisted the researcher to ascertain that all items in the questionnaire are objective based.

## Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of text and image according to (Creswell, 2009). It encompasses gathering open-ended data, based on asking overall questions and developing an analysis from the information given by respondents. Cooper and Schindler (2003) stated that the process where data is reduced to a convenient size, coming up with summaries, looking for patterns, and employing statistical methods such as tables, charts, and percentages.

The Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows software was used in analyzing quantitative data. The data is presented in form of pie charts and graphs. The researcher used data collected from the selected students to make a generalization about the whole student population of Daystar. The data was analyzed with the help of a data analyst. Qualitative data generated through the interviews was analyzed thematically. The researcher settled on thematic analysis since it was adaptable and can be used in any theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher looked out for keywords and patterns equivalent to the quantitative research. The qualitative research supported the quantitative research.

## Ethical Considerations

Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell (2008), argued that research ethics accentuates on saying what is right and wrong in the research period. Ethics ensured that the scholar adhered to the correct process in the gathering and evaluation of data and recommendation of the research outcomes. Critical to making decisions at the time of research are values and judgments (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2008). Every institution has its own specific requirements in relation to research activity. Being a

student of Daystar, the researcher consulted with the supervisors, the university, and the government for clearance before data collection. This was done by seeking approval from the Daystar University Ethics Research Board (DU-ERB) and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before going to the field to collect data. An introductory letter for data collection was obtained to enable the researcher to collect the data from Daystar University staff and employees.

The researcher avoided bias in data analyzing and interpretation by ensuring that there was objectivity and no self-deception. Since the respondents were students at the institution and were afraid of being victimized, the researcher assured them of confidentiality as only the researcher had access to the data collected, and the data collected was strictly for academic purposes. The researcher also guaranteed the respondents of privacy by not including their names in the questionnaire. The data collected was safely stored in a locked cabinet for future reference and data protection, only the researcher accessed the data and will not be disseminated to any parties.

The prospective respondents had the right to accept or deny participating in the research. The researcher notified the participants verbally that participation in the research was voluntary and they could reject participation. The researcher also ensured that the respondents knew their participation rights. They were made aware that participation was on a voluntary basis, they could withdraw from the study any given point and were not obligated to answer questions that they were not comfortable with. The language used was conversant to the participants. The researcher trained

two research assistants for the study. Upon completion, a copy of the dissertation will be available at the Daystar University library.

The researcher avoided fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. For intellectual property, patent copyrights and other forms of intellectual property were honored. In terms of plagiarism, the researchers did not fabricate or falsify data in their publications and gave appropriate credit for the other authors work through citations. Additionally, the researcher analyzed the data in a manner that avoided misstatements and misinterpretation.

The researcher ensured that the identities of the respondents were protected by not including a name section in the data collection tools and not quoting the respondents during the presentation of data and findings.

#### Summary

This chapter gave an overview of the research methods that were used to gather and interpret data. The chapter also presented the population studied, the sample size and the sampling method, data collection instruments, pretesting, procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations

## CHAPTER FOUR

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

## Introduction

This chapter presents data that was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, and qualitative data was thematically analyzed. The chapter presents, analyze, and interprets the data as per the research questions. This study aimed at assessing social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis at Daystar University. To this end, the study had three research questions to guide the data collection: RQ 1. How social media was used during the 2017/2018 crisis at Daystar University? RQ2. How did Daystar University manage crisis communication during the 2017/2018 crisis? RQ3. How did social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis affect the corporate reputation of Daystar University? The analysis and interpretation included all the 118 respondents from the data of the study.

## Analysis and Interpretation

## Response Rate

Study findings on the response rate were as shown in Table 4.1

*Table 4.1: Response Rate*

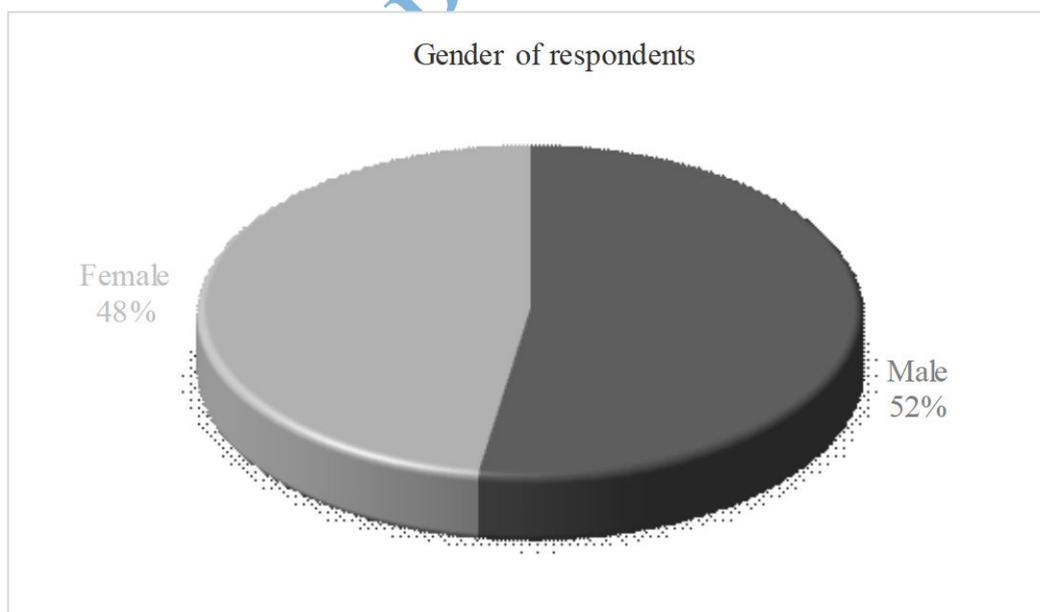
	Target	Response	Percent (%)
Questionnaires	120	118	91.5
Interviews	4	3	75.0
Total	124	121	97.58

The study distributed 120 questionnaires to the six schools in Daystar University. Out of the 120 distributed, 118 questionnaires were appropriately filled and returned; hence, the response rate was 91.5%. The sample frame was comprised

of all Undergraduate students in both Athi-river and valley road campuses. Data was collected from the undergraduate students through questionnaires. For the key informants, three in-depth interviews out of four were conducted, hence a response rate of 75%. All the three interviews were conducted at the corporate affairs department. This represented an overall response rate of 91.5% on quantitative and 75% for qualitative data, which means that the overall response rate for this study was 97.58%. For generalizations, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) note that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis, 60% is good, and 70% and above is excellent. Therefore, this study's overall response rate of 97.6% was excellent hence satisfactory for analysis.

#### Gender

Findings on gender distribution were as shown in Figure 4.1.

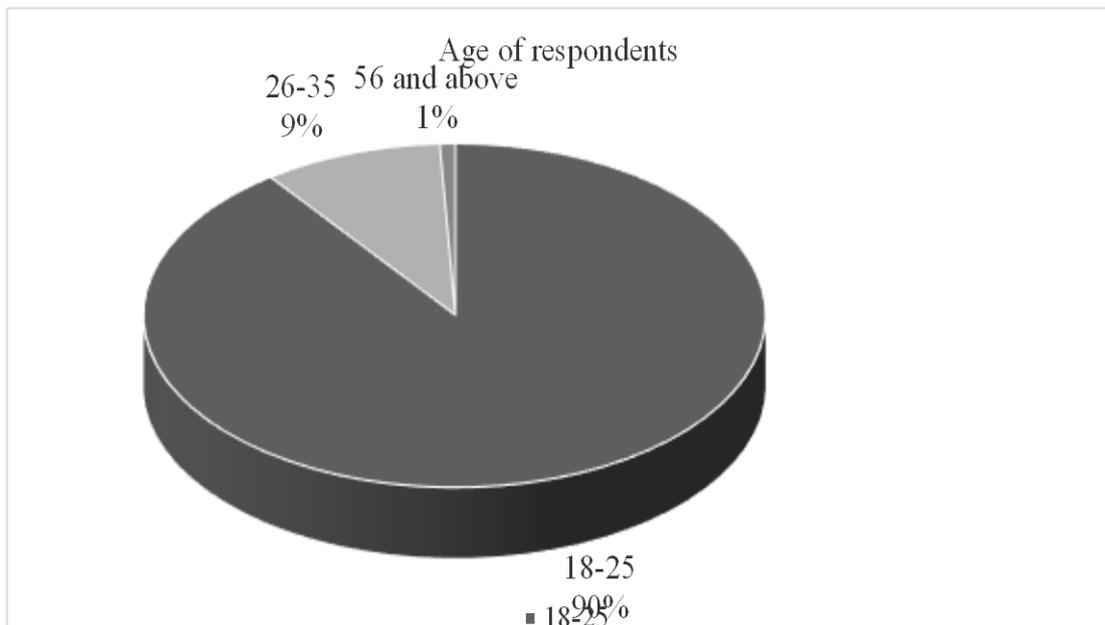


*Figure 4.1: Gender of Respondents*

Study findings on gender distribution from the questionnaires, indicate that 47.5% of the respondents were male and 52.5% were female indicating a close distribution of the sample in terms of gender. This indicates that Daystar University has a higher number of female students than male at the undergraduate level. However, this finding did not have a significant effect on the quality of responses gathered. Gender distribution from the interviews indicate that 100% of the respondents were female. From the in- depth interviews the findings imply that the institution not only has more women working in the Corporate Affairs Department but also there are more female professionals in the Corporate communication field. Nevertheless, this study was interested in the data the respondents gave and not their gender, therefore, this finding bears no significance in this study however much it has been noted and documented.

#### Age of Respondents

Age was a demographic profile the researcher sought to find out in the questionnaires in order to understand the age brackets of the undergraduate students in Daystar University. Figure 4.2 indicates the distribution of age.



*Figure 4.2: Age of Respondents*

From the findings, most of the respondents were aged between 18-25 years old 89.8%, followed by those between 26-35 years old with 9.3%, there were no respondents aged between 36-45 and 46-55 years old. Respondents who were above the age of 56 years old were 0.8%. Therefore, the findings were interpreted to suggest that most (89.8%) students were between 18 to 25 years old. This implies that most of the respondents were in the bracket with most tech savvy individuals and were able to use social media platforms that could have led increased online exposure and online media visibility about the crisis.

#### Level of Study

The study sought to find out the level of study of the respondents. Figure 4.3 shows the respondents level of study.

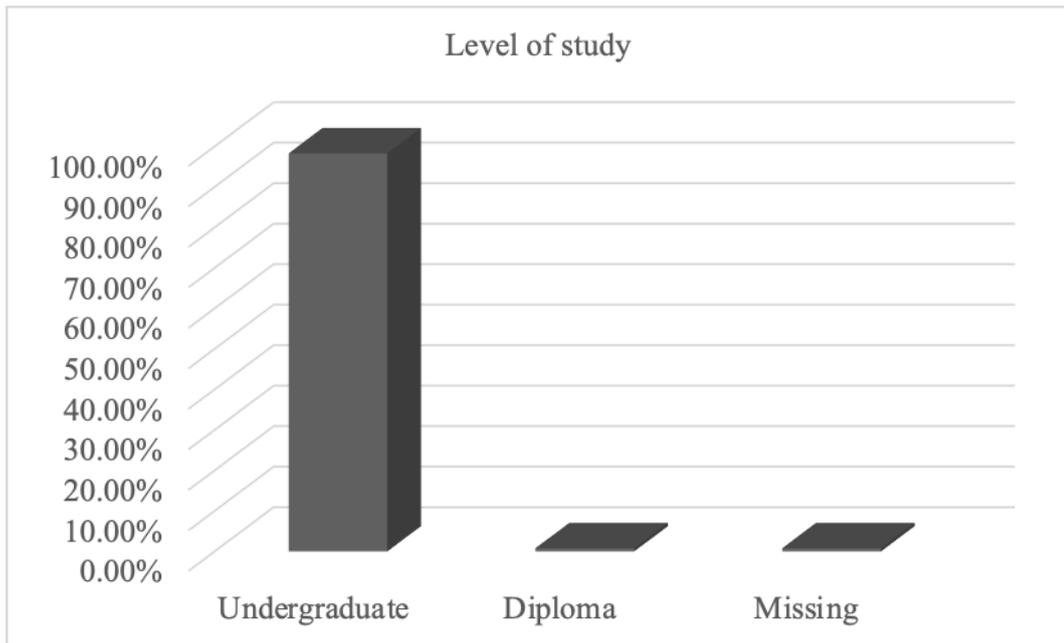


Figure 4.3: Level of Study

Findings revealed that out of the 118 respondents who took part in responding to the questionnaire, 98.3% were undertaking bachelor's degree and 0.8% undertaking diploma courses at the institution and 0.8% chose not to answer the question. This indicates that all the respondents who participated in the study were Undergraduate students. From the interviews conducted at the Corporate Affairs Department of Daystar University, data revealed that two (75%) of the respondents had a master's degree in Communication. This means that the University hires some of the most qualified employees to the corporate communication.

#### School of Study

When asked which school they were enrolled in at the institution, Figure 4.4 shows the different schools the respondents were enrolled into.

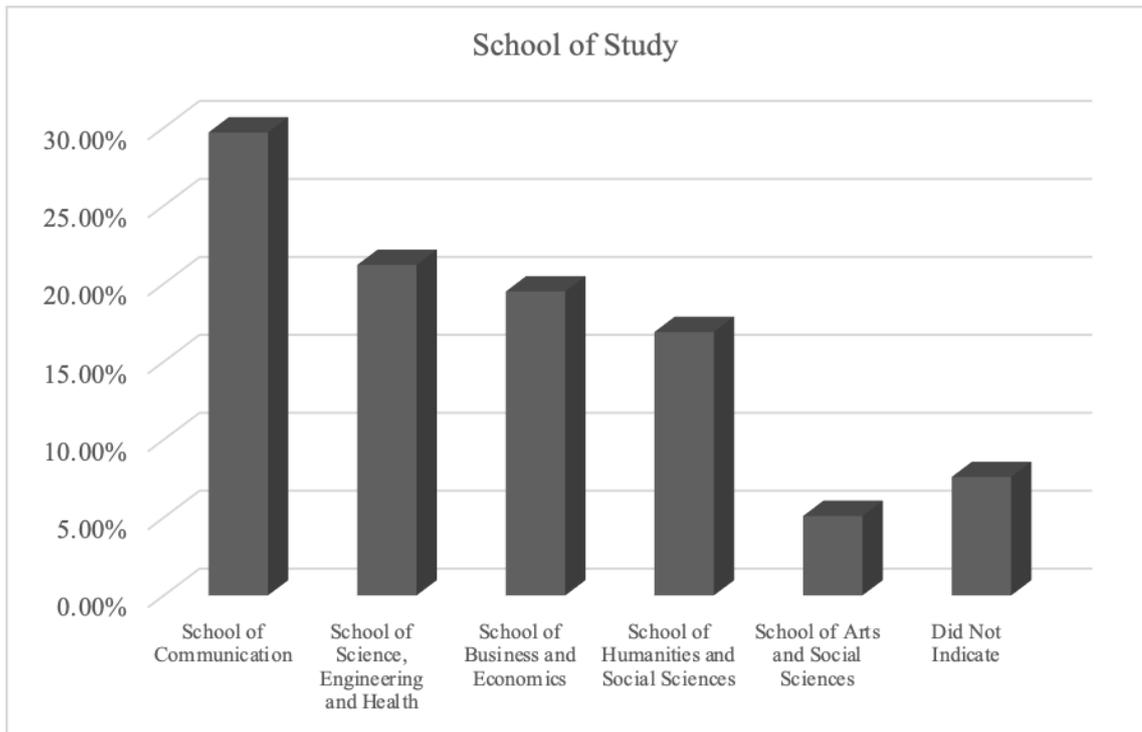


Figure 4.4: School of Study

Findings reveal that 5.1% of the respondents did not indicate which school they were in, 7.6% indicated they were studying in the school of Arts and Social Sciences, 16.9 % were in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, 19.5% in the School of Business and Economics. The School of Science, Engineering and Health and the School of Communication had the highest number of respondents at 21.2% and 29.7% respectively. Therefore, these findings imply that most of the respondents were from the school of communication. These findings reflect the data provided by the university registrar on the student population as shown in Table 3.2. The findings affirm that the school of communication has the highest number of students, who utilized the communication training in using social media during of the crisis.

### Campus Attended by the Respondents

The respondents were required to indicate the campus where they attend their lectures, Figure 4.5 shows their responses.

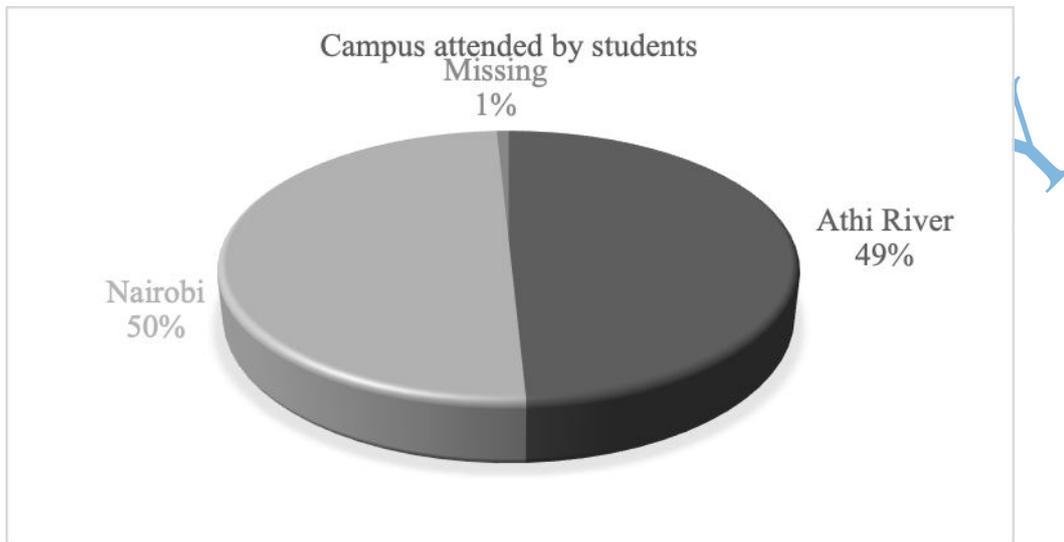


Figure 4.5: Campus Attended by the Respondents

From the findings, 0.8% of the respondents did not indicate which campus they were in while 49.2% of the respondents indicated they were studying at the Athi River Campus, 50% indicated they were studying at the Nairobi Campus. Initially, the data from the University Registrar indicated that Nairobi Campus had the highest student population than Athi River Campus. Athi River Campus had registered 1735 students while the Nairobi Campus had a total of 3785 students registered. These findings are an indicated that as much as Athi River Campus is the main campus, it has a lower student's population as compared to Nairobi Campus.

### Social Media Subscription by the Students and Daystar University

In terms of the social media subscriptions, Figure 4.6 shows the social media sites the respondents have accounts.

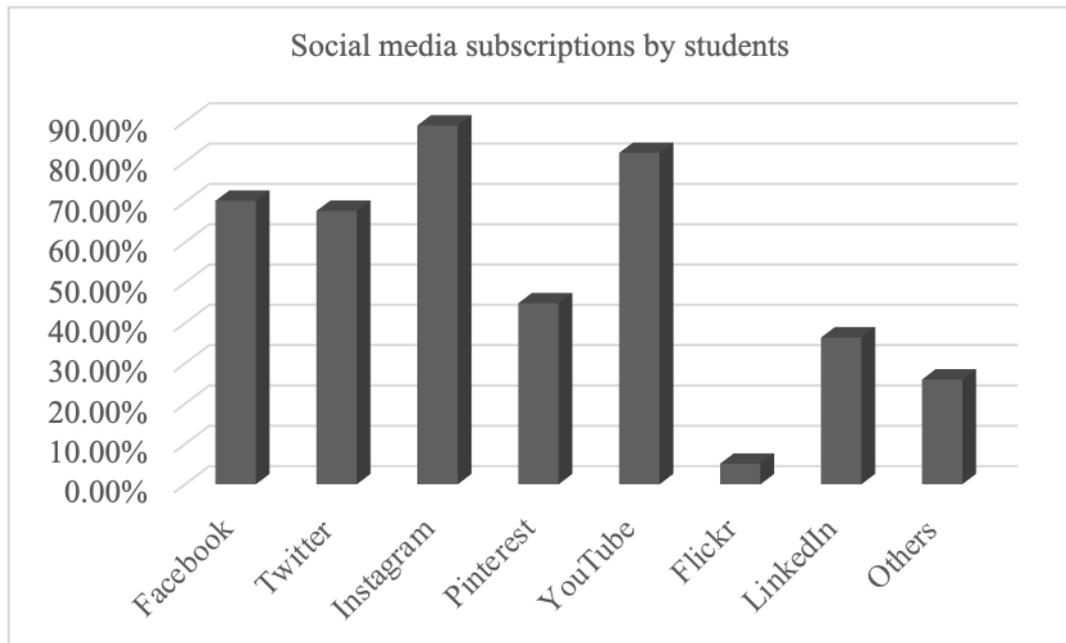


Figure 4.6: Social Media Subscriptions by Students

From the data collected through questionnaires, 5.1% of the respondents indicated that they were subscribed to Flickr, 22% of the respondents indicated that they were subscribed to other social media platforms that were not part of the study, these include Looper man and WhatsApp. About 36.4% of the respondents were subscribed to LinkedIn, 44.9% were subscribed to Pinterest, 67.8% of the respondents were subscribed to Twitter. The study also found out that 70.3% were on Facebook. 82.2% of the respondents were subscribed to YouTube and 89% of the respondents were subscribed to Instagram. These findings are an indication that Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular social media sites that are used by the respondents, these sites are most popular among the respondents aged

between 18 and 25. These platforms can therefore be used when disseminating information to University students, as they will receive the information.

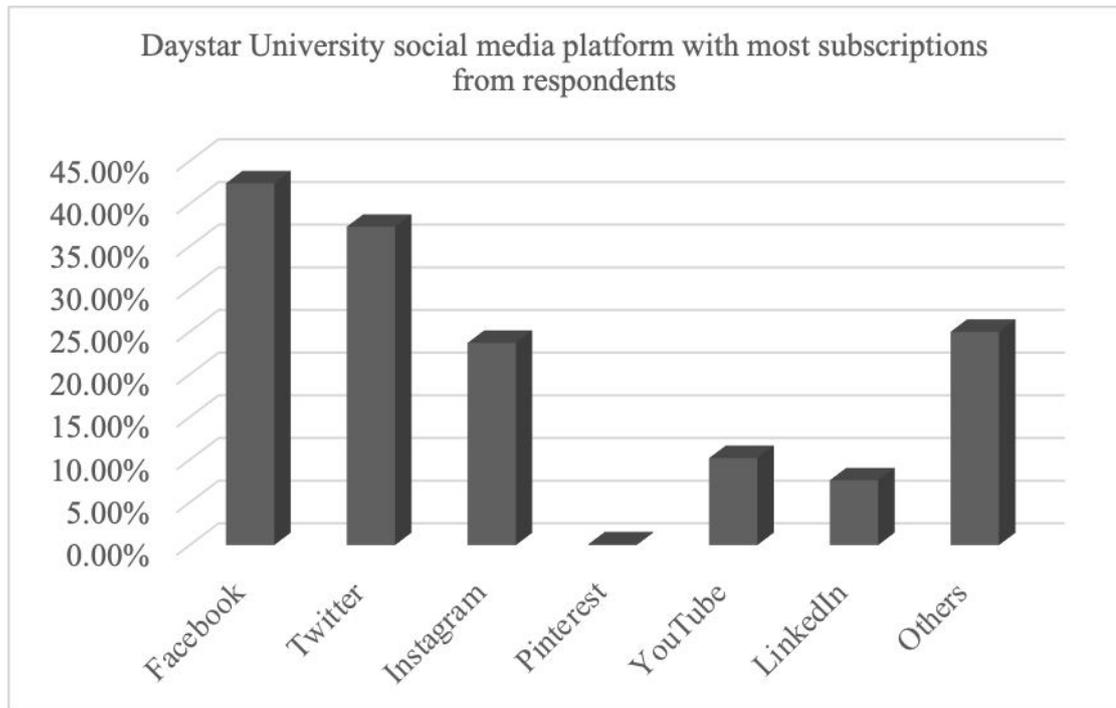
From the in-depth interviews, the study found out that the institution is subscribed to several social media platforms. Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 (the researcher coded the interviewees for easy identification and readability e.g. Respondent Corp/1/2/2019) stated as follows:

*The institution is subscribed to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and the school Website. These social networking sites are managed by five selected members from the Corporate Affairs Department. We have policies in place that govern how social media is handled and all the five members have undergone rigorous training on social media management.*

The above findings imply that social media management is an integral part of any organization, especially for institutions like Daystar University whose target audience are majorly the youth that actively use social media. The finding is also an indication that organizations cannot ignore social media while hoping to engage their stakeholders, instead incorporate social media in their communication strategies.

#### Daystar University Social Media Platform with Most Subscriptions

Figure 4.7 shows Daystar University social media pages with the most subscriptions.



*Figure 4.7: Daystar University Social Media Platforms with most Subscriptions*

From the findings, 0.8% of the respondents indicated that they followed Daystar University on Pinterest, 25% indicated others without mentioning which one they referred to. Additionally, 7.6% indicated that they followed Daystar University on LinkedIn, 10.2 % followed on YouTube, 23.7% on Instagram and 30.4 % did not follow the university on any of its social media sites. The university had the highest number of followers on Twitter and Facebook at 37.3 % and 42.4 % respectively. These findings are an indication that majority of the students use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube for information, can therefore be effective tools for crisis communication.

### Social Media Sites Used by the Respondents During the Student's unrest

Figure 4.8 shows the social media sites used by the respondents during the 2017/2018 unrest.

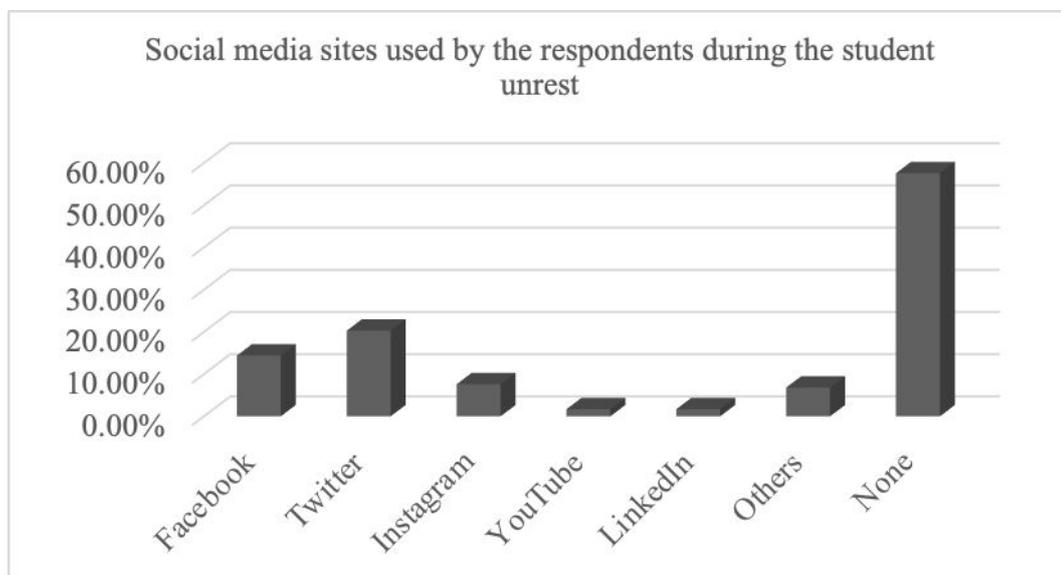


Figure 4.8: Social Media Sites used by the Respondents During the Unrest

The findings revealed that 1.7% of the respondents used YouTube to post about the unrest, 1.7% used LinkedIn and 7.6% of the respondents posted the unrest on Instagram. Facebook and Twitter attracted the highest number of students who posted about the unrest at 14.4% and 20.3% respectively. About 6.8% of the respondents indicated that they posted on other social networking sites naming WhatsApp and Telegram as some of the other platforms. The other 57.6% of the respondents indicated they did not post anything on any social media concerning the unrest.

The above finding is an indication that during the crisis, majority of the students at Daystar University did not post about the unrest on social media, despite the crisis being escalated on social media. The findings further reveal that, during a crisis, not all the respondents used social media to paint the university's reputation

negatively, it could be argued that some social media users who posted negative comments may have been individuals who were not Daystar University students.

Findings from the interviews, revealed that the university used social media platforms to communicate with the students at the time of the crisis. Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 revealed that at the outset of the crisis the institution used Facebook to communicate as follows:

*We put out some posts on Facebook regarding the strike, this was guided by a prior social media evaluation that revealed the social media site had a larger audience, and thus the communication would reach a bigger audience.*

However, the study found out that during the crisis the institution halted their communication via social media when the comments became negatively overwhelming. Therefore, this means that the institution partially used social media as a communication channel during the crisis.

#### Students Following Social Media Information on the Unrest

Figure 4.9 shows the respondents who followed Daystar University on social media in the quest for information about the unrest. The respondents used their phones to seek for any kind of information about Daystar University, including posts from the students and the university.

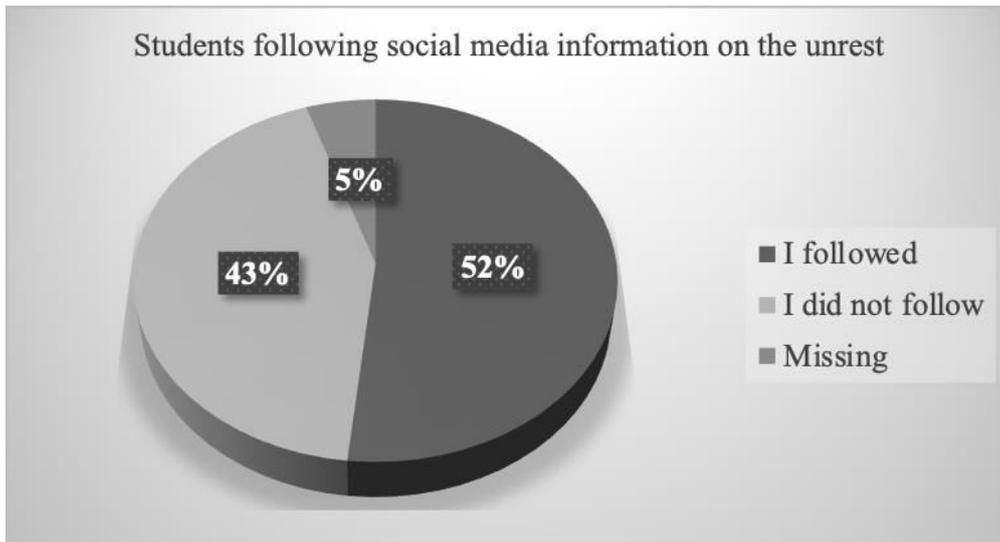


Figure 4.9: Students Following Social Media Information on the Unrest

The researcher further wanted to determine the students who resorted to check Daystar University social media platforms for information on the crisis. Data revealed that 5.1% of the respondents chose not to respond to this question. Out of those who answered the question, 43.2% indicated that they did not follow any social media sites for information on the crisis and 51.7% indicated that they followed the social media posts. The findings mean that majority of the students, at the time of the crisis, turned to social media for information. These findings are an indication that during a crisis, individuals often utilize different communication channels to gather information and find mitigation measures put in place by the organization. Thus, the need for organizations to employ platforms such as social media in their crisis communication.

Since social media link the world, the information shared on social media during a crisis is likely to reach various publics. Despite 57.6% of the respondents not posting anything about the unrest on social media, they were aware of the kind of conversation and information posted. While some respondents 51.7% were aware of

the information posted on social media through passive interaction, other respondents most probably got updates from their peers who posted and participated in the unrest.

#### Evaluation of Daystar University's Social Media Usage

Figure 4.10 shows the evaluation of Daystar University's social media usage in terms of frequency, clarity, and speed of communication during the unrest.

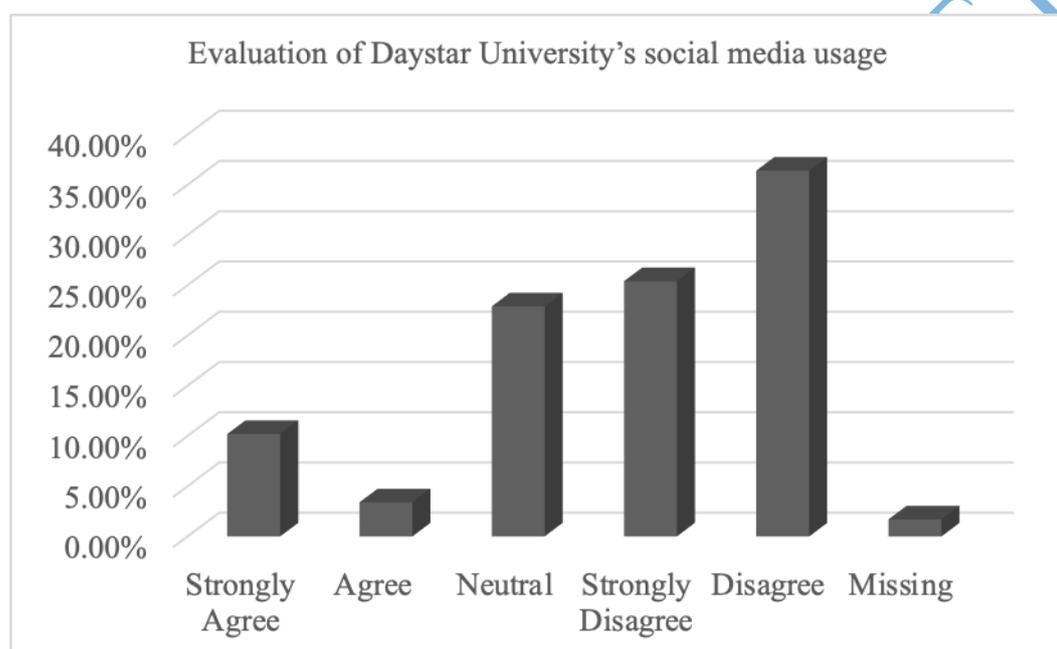


Figure 4.10: Evaluation of Daystar University's Social Media Usage

The findings indicated that 13.6% were satisfied with how the institution used social media while 61.8% were dissatisfied with the University's usage of social media during the crisis. However, 1.7% of the respondents chose not to respond to the question and 22.9% of the respondents chose to remain neutral. These findings mean that majority of the respondents were not content with how the institution handled the crisis on social media, the crisis communication was not timely, it was inadequate and ambiguous.

Data findings from the In-depth interviews revealed that the university did not disseminate information on social media with great speed and neither did they give out constant updates on the social networking sites.

Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 acknowledged that the reason for not communicating constantly via social media was because the social media plan at hand had to change. The response was as below:

*Our plan for social media, during the crisis, initially involved us simply sending out messages to try calm the students down and assure them that the situation was under control, but the moment we sent out the positive messages, all we received were insults, and questions concerning the grievances raised, and since the school was still in a stage where they were trying to figure out how to solve the situation, we really did not have much information to rely.*

Respondent Corp/2/2/2019 added as follows:

*The messages we were sending out were clearly not what the students wanted to read or hear. We thus opted to not post on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter which we had initially resorted to and we further went on to deleted some of the posts we had put out because they were being shared countless times and reaching large masses of people.*

Respondent Corp/2/2/2019 statements further, corroborated with what Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 had said by stating as follows:

*We tried to have conversations online and tell the students that the institution had the matter under control, but these approaches did not seem to work for us. The students had set their minds on what they wanted, hence everything we tried backfired.*

These findings mean that Daystar University was not prepared to handle the crisis and to incorporate social media in their crisis communication strategy. The use of social media during the crisis is vital in managing information during a crisis,

therefore, crisis managers should select the most appropriate strategy and channels to protect the reputation of an organization.

#### Social Media Usage in Addressing Student Grievances

Figure 4.11 shows findings on how social media was used in addressing students' grievances.

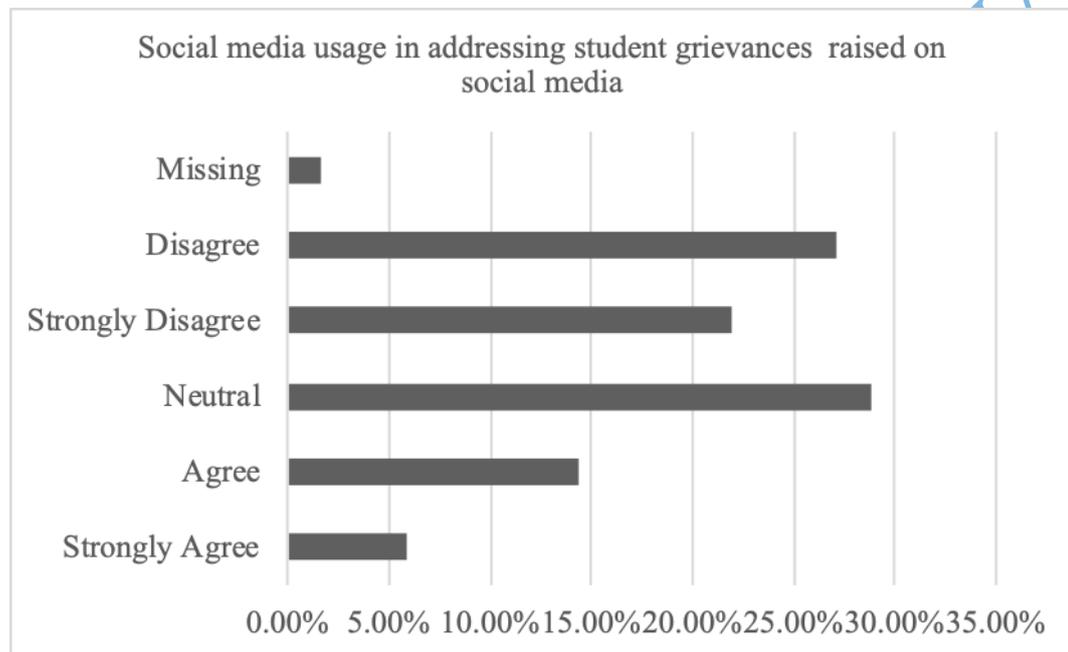


Figure 4.11: Social Media Usage in Addressing Students' Grievances

When asked to evaluate Daystar University's response strategy to the grievances posted on social media, the findings indicate that 49.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the University responded to their grievances. 20.3% of the respondents agreed that their grievances were addressed, 1.7% of the respondents chose not to respond and 28.8% of the respondents chose to remain neutral. The findings can be interpreted to mean that most of the respondents felt that the response of social media was dissatisfactory, thus social media strategy used by the institution at the time of the crisis was not effective.

Further, Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 revealed that the institution opted not to respond to the student's grievances on social media as they deemed the issue as an internal issue. The response was as indicated below:

*During the crisis, we monitored the posts that were being shared on social media and noted that some individuals who were propelling the hashtags were not Daystar University students, and since the issue was between the students and management, we opted to solve the issue in house. It was very challenging to try and get the students to engage in dialogue as they were fixated on instant solutions.*

Respondent Corp/2/2/2019 further corroborated this by stating as follows:

*It was management vs students' issue and not with the other publics on social media, the students were fighting the management and the institution did what it did to protect the students. We opted to address the issues in house, through meetings and using emails and memos to communicate our stand on the strike and what we were doing.*

The above findings imply that the university was aware of the impact of the information and conversations that arise from social media would have on the reputation of the university.

#### Evaluation of the Social Media Usage by Daystar University

Figure 4.12 shows the evaluation of the university's usage of social media during the crisis.

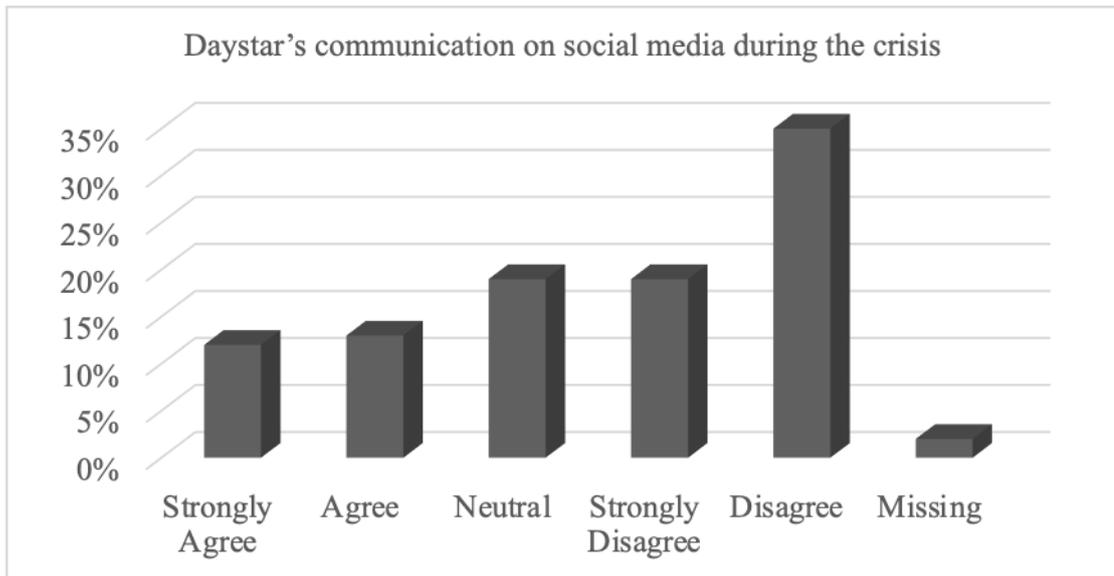


Figure 4.12: Daystar University's Communication on Social Media in the Crisis

When asked whether the university used social media during the 2017/2018 crisis to engage students, 54.2 % of the respondents disagreed and 25.5% of the respondents agreed. However, 18.6% of the respondents chose to remain neutral while 1.7% chose not to respond to this question. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied by the university's engagement on social media, since they presented their grievances on social media, but they did not receive feedback through the same channels.

These findings are corroborated by findings from the in-depth interviews which reveal that the organization, at the onset of the crisis did not have a social media strategy for the crisis.

The response from Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 is stated below:

*We had to develop a social media strategy during the crisis, but it was also quite countered by the student body. But as days went by, the responses on social media became overwhelming, we responded with positive messages, which beseeched the students to be patient as we tried to gather facts and solve the issue internally and not necessarily*

*responding to the negative comments about the school, but in time we gave up as the negative comments were overwhelming.” Many times, we pulled down messages to reduce the avalanche of countering messages which worsened the crisis in the public eye. Despite these, we noted where information was not readily available and took the issues to closed door discussions with student leaders who had spearheaded the crisis.*

These findings can be interpreted to mean that in crisis, the organization needs a social media strategy to guide in managing the situation. This is because when an organization does not communicate or respond to the stakeholders concerns it in turn creates negative publicity. As much as it may not be possible to respond to all the comments or control what is being said on social media, it is important that the organization show empathy to the stakeholders instead of deleting negative comments or concerns raised. The act of deleting may create a perception of deceit, lack of transparency and no concern, resulting to credibility issues.

#### Evaluating the University’s Communication on Social Media During Crisis

The respondents were further asked if they considered the information shared on social media by Daystar University during the 2018/2019 crisis was enough. Figure 4.13 gives the findings to the question.

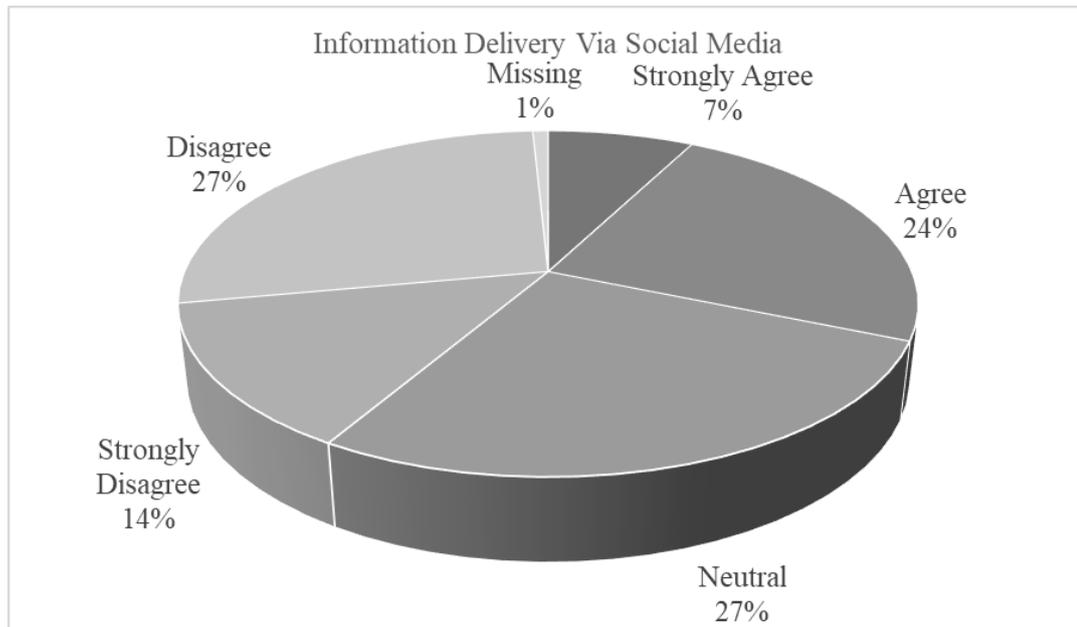


Figure 4.13: Information Delivery Via Social Media

About 40.7% of the respondents disagreed, 31.3% agreed, while 27.1% remained neutral and 0.8% of the respondent did not respond to the question. Majority of the respondents felt that at the time of crisis, the university did not have enough neither did it meet their expectations. The interviews findings reveal that the institution had most of the information that their stakeholders needed regarding what the institution was doing in regard to managing the crisis and solving their grievances, but they were faced by a myriad of challenges including responses.

Respondent Corp3/2/2019 stated as follows:

*The challenge came about with the distilling of the messages in the absence of appropriate responses to the questions that followed the messages which were posted, and further adapt these to the different media channels.*

Despite the corporate affairs confession that they were in possession of the information needed by their stakeholders, they did share it on their social media platforms. being prepared with information to share with their s stakeholders, the

institution was not only unprepared to respond to the questions that were raised by the students, the numbers of concerns raised were overwhelming for the institution.

#### Evaluation of Daystar University Properly Managed the Social Media Crisis

Figure 4.14 shows the evaluation of Daystar's management of the crisis on social media.

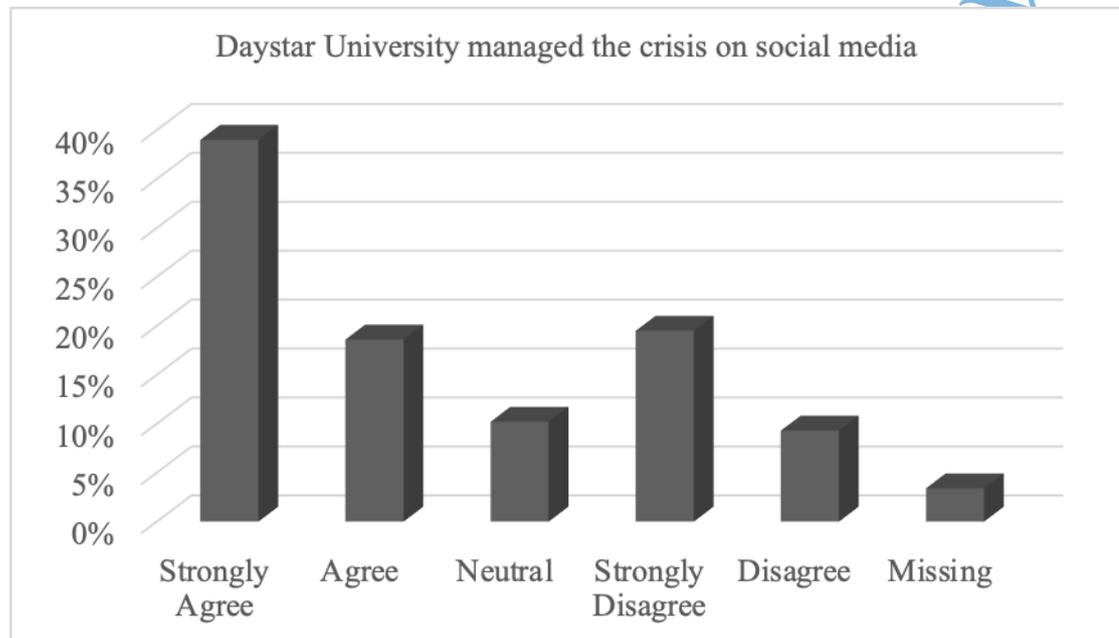


Figure 4.14: Daystar University Managed the Crisis on Social Media

When asked if they were confident in the way Daystar University managed the crisis on social media in the 2017/2018, 57.6% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. 28.8% of the respondents indicated that they were confident in the way Daystar University managed the crisis on social media during the unrest while 10.2% chose to remain neutral while 3.4% respondents refrained from responding to this question. While most of the respondents (57.6%) were not confident with the way Daystar University managed the crisis, a significant proportion of the student indicated they were confident with the way the university handled the students'

unrest. This can be interpreted to mean that the students followed information on the crisis from multiple information outlets therefore increasing their confidence beyond the use of social media as a source of information.

From the in-depth interviews, the institution handled the crisis in the best way they could, it being the first time the institution was facing a social media fueled crisis. Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 stated as follows:

*The social media crisis was a learning curve for the institution, we had no prior experience in handling a similar situation and thus it was very challenging, it was however helpful because moving forward we have learned the importance of social media usage during a crisis.*

Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 shared the same sentiments as Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 and stated as follows:

*The scenario has also advised the University on how to manage social media even without a crisis. We are now very active and our posts on the platforms are now more intentional.*

The findings imply that crises can spell out opportunities, for instance, learning opportunities on proper management practices and opportunities for stakeholder relationship building. It may also indicate that the university may have overlooked the importance of using social media during a crisis. Thus, organizations need to rethink their crisis management strategies so as to be well equipped in the event they are faced by a different or similar crisis. Because not handling crises properly subject an institution to various losses.

Perceived Perception on the Corporate Reputation of Daystar University

The researcher sought to assess social media usage during the 2017/2018 crisis and the effects it had on the corporate reputation using Harris-Fombrum’s reputation quotient (RQ) which lists social responsibility, emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, financial performance and workplace environment as some of the measures of corporate reputation. The findings are presented below.

Evaluation of Daystar’s Conduct During the Crisis

Figure 4.15 shows the evaluation of Daystar’s conduct during the crisis versus what they say about themselves

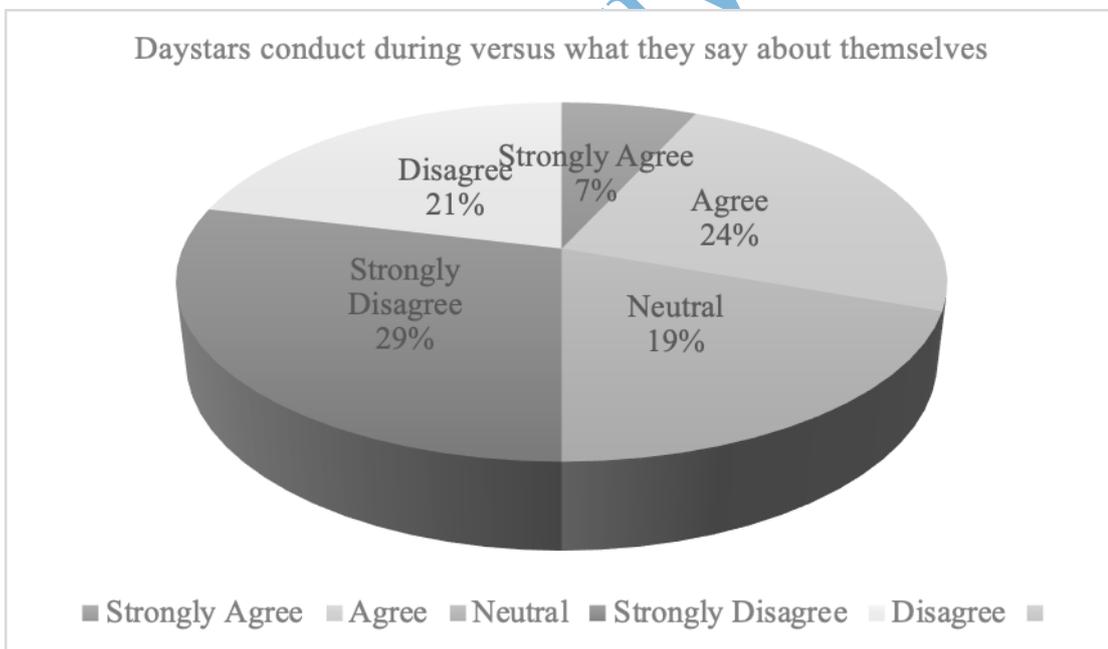


Figure 4.15:Daystar University’s Conduct During the Crisis versus What they Say

The researcher sought to find out if Daystar’s conduct at the time of the crisis was consistent with its reputation as a Christian based university, 19.5% of the respondents chose to remain neutral, 43.40% of the respondents indicated that they

agreed with the statement and 50% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the University's actions were consistent with their Christian reputation.

This finding indicates that the respondents were evenly distributed, with half of them indicating that the university did not appear as Christian based university in its response while handling the crisis. These findings can be attributed to the happenings at the institution during the time of the crisis. For instance, when the Vice Chancellor at the time ordered for immediate closure of the school, Daystar University student body called for demonstrations, the police were notified to be on standby to assist the university security with clearing the campus in the event of defiance, while most students cleared within the given time, a small group of about 200 students defied and stayed on beyond the time allowed. The police proceeded to lob tear gas to disperse the crowd and move them out of campus. No student was shot; but some fell and got injuries after police moved in. Five international students were arrested by the police after vandalizing private businesses off campus.

Therefore, this finding means that the perceptions of the students on the organizations may have been comprised from the way the institution handled them during the crisis. This is because the institution has branded itself as a Christian University as the actions taken by the university were unlike their values.

### Daystar University Took Responsibility for the 2017/2018 Crisis

Figure 4.16 shows the respondents evaluation of Daystar University taking responsibility for the crisis.

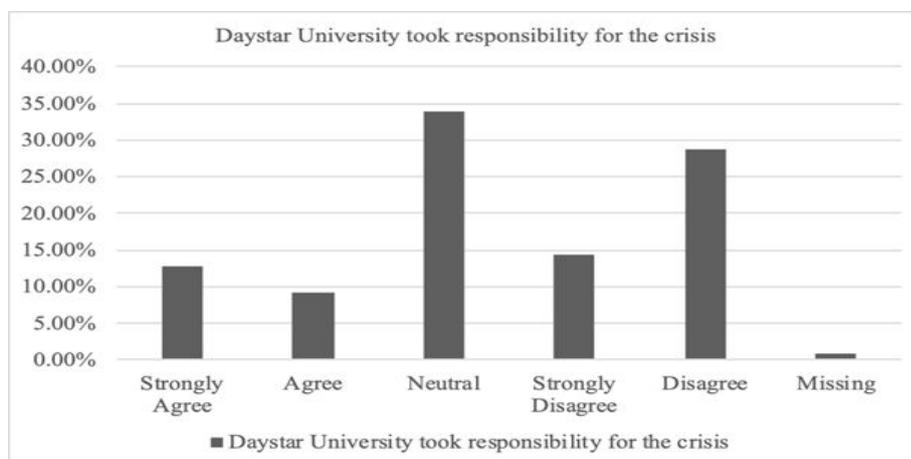


Figure 4.16: Daystar University Took Responsibility for the Crisis

When asked if they thought Daystar University took responsibility for the crisis that happened at the institution in 2017/2018, 22% of the respondents believed the institution took responsibility for the crisis that happened at the institution. 33.9% of the respondents chose to remain neutral 0.8% chose not to respond to this question. 43.2% of the respondents disagreed that the institution took responsibility for the crisis. From the overall responsiveness of the 2017/2018 unrest in the institution, most of the respondents thought the institution did not take responsibility for the crisis as opposed to a minority who thought the university did. This means that the response strategy chosen by the institution at the time of the crisis was not ideal.

This information collaborated with findings from the interview which reveal a chronology of events from when the crisis started and to how they finally were able to get the issue under control.

Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 stated as follows:

*Since management was at the center of the crisis, it was challenging to handle the crisis. At the onset, the institution did not publicly acknowledge that indeed there were underlying challenges that needed to be addressed. For the student, the lack of acknowledgement was a sign of arrogance and ignorance, in turn the student sought the management and Vice-chancellors attention which was met with resistance. The management opted not to address or meet the students, the situation escalated, to the point that the student sought for attention of their parents, media, ministry of education and higher authorities, through social media and traditional media.*

The students used Twitter and Facebook to tweet and post their concerns about the institution, respectively. The content posted on social media were mainly; photographs, videos, audios, and hashtags, which in turn caught the attention of Daystar University in the United States and donors. The institution was finally closed due to the boycott of classes and unrest. These findings mean that most often crisis managers select a strategy that they deem appropriate for a crisis, but in some instances the strategy may work against them like in the case of Daystar.

Failure by the institution to offer prompt communication to the students on their grievances and acknowledging the vices and offering them with solutions may have had negative impacts on the crisis management. The choice to not address the issues fast enough may have caused the escalation of the crisis. However, communication could have facilitated a containment of the crisis before it became hard to control. A choice of wrong strategy may result in an organization crisis escalating and further harming the reputation of an organization. The deployment of the policemen who injured some students may have contributed to reputational damage.

### Evaluation of Daystar University's Leadership During the Crisis.

Figure 4.17 shows the respondents evaluation of Daystar university's leadership during the crisis.

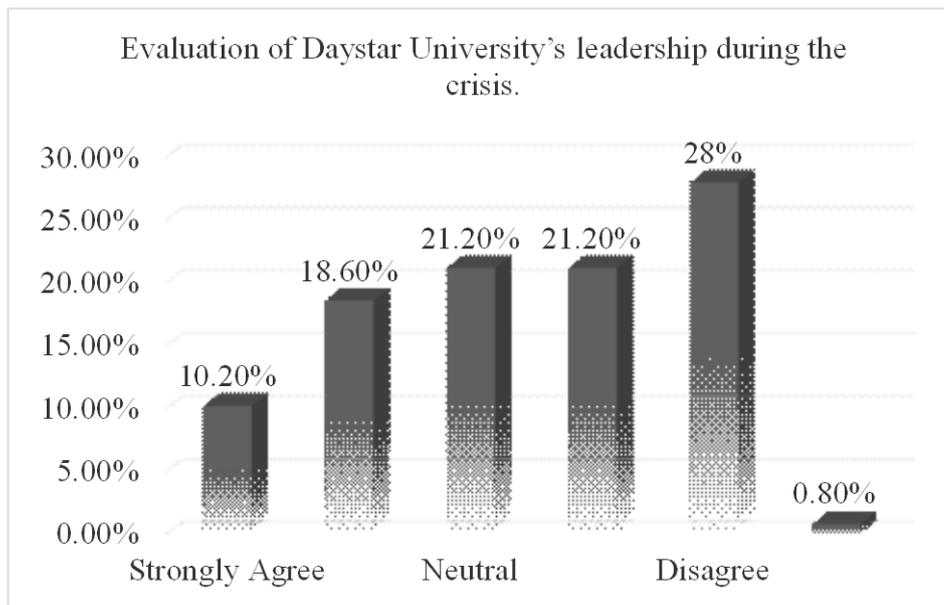


Figure 4.17: Daystar University had Clear Leadership During the Crisis

When asked if Daystar University had clear leadership during the 2017/2018 crisis to enable the institution to manage and overcome the crisis, 0.8% of the respondents refrained from responding to this question. Those who responded, 21.2% chose to remain neutral, 49.2% of the respondents disagreed and 28.8% of the respondents agreed. The findings indicate that at the time of the crisis a majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the institution had no clear leadership. This finding can be interpreted to mean that Daystar University did not have clear leadership at the time of the crisis, and this may have contributed to the crisis prolongation.

These findings were corroborated by findings from the interview Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 who stated as follows:

*With the incumbent Vice Chancellor and Council Chair caught up right at the center of allegations around the crisis, it was a challenge to identify an authority with the right positioning to convincingly respond to issues that were under investigation to hostile, inquisitive and doubtful audiences. Therefore, addressing staff, students, parents, and media satisfactorily did not effectively take off until the appointment of Ag. VC on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017.*

The finding is an indication that leadership was one of the challenges the university faced when managing the crisis and it may have contributed to the prolonging of the crisis. The role of leadership in crisis management is significant as the leader is an individual who is deemed capable of identifying prodromes, capable of protecting an organization against a crisis, and possess the ability to make decisions, plan, organize and ensure communication throughout the crisis management process. But if the leader is caught up in the midst of the crisis may set an organization back in the quest to avert the crisis. The lack of good leadership in a crisis can result in adverse effects to an organization. This finding thus shows proper leadership is vital to avoid adverse effects.

#### Evaluation of Daystar's Capability to Handle Online Crises

Figure 4.18 shows the respondents evaluation of Daystar's capability of handling a social media crisis.

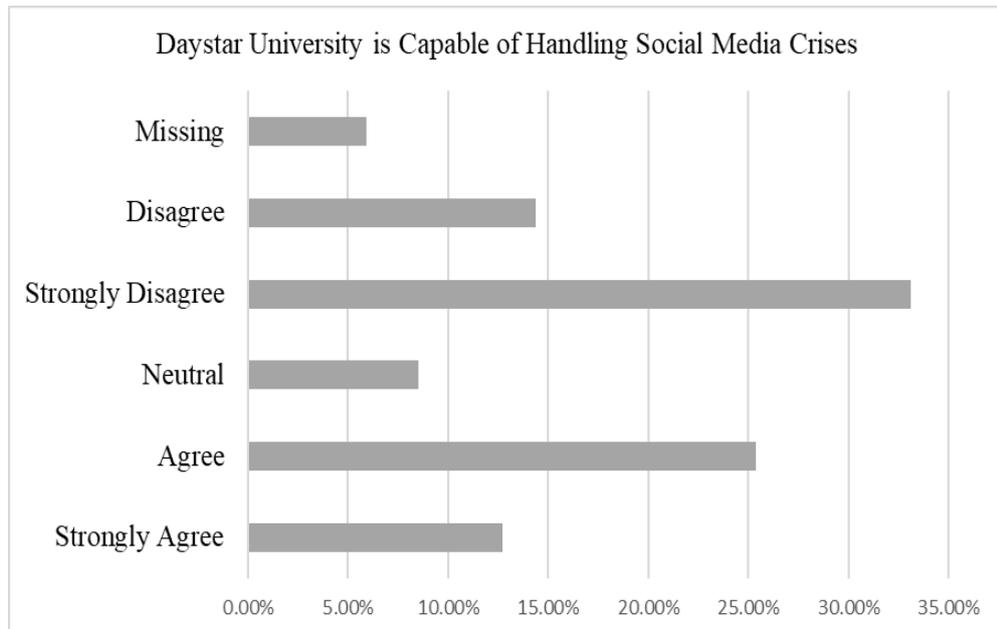


Figure 4.18: Daystar University is Capable of Handling Social Media Crises

When asked if Daystar University is capable of handling social media crises, of the respondents, 5.9% chose not to respond. Those who responded, 8.5% of the respondents chose to remain neutral neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 38.1% of the respondents agreed that Daystar University was capable of handling social media, and 47.5% of the respondents disagreed that the institution could a social media crisis. The findings show that most of the respondents think that Daystar University is not capable of handling online crisis because they did not utilize social media fully during the student's unrest. It is clear that there was a lack of constant tweets and Facebook messages updating the students on the progress of the crisis and further it can be concluded that the institution undermined the effective use of social media which would have been used as a platform for communication.

Findings from the interviews however reveal that the institution handled the crisis in the best way they could despite being countered by negative responses from online users when they posted.

Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 stated as follows:

*Despite our strategy changing midway, and not having the right messages, I think we managed to handle the situation quiet well. Other Universities think we managed well and have reached out to benchmark with Daystar University, for instance, Masinde Muliro University, Technical University of Kenya, and a Ugandan University on the Daystar University model of working with parents during a crisis.*

Therefore, this means that the university may have lacked a social media plan to handle the online crisis. But how they eventually handled the crisis earned them a favorable reputation from other institutions.

#### Evaluation of the Corporate Affairs use of Social Media and its Effects on Corporate Reputation

Figure 4.19 shows the respondents evaluation of the Corporate Affairs use of social media and its effect on reputation.

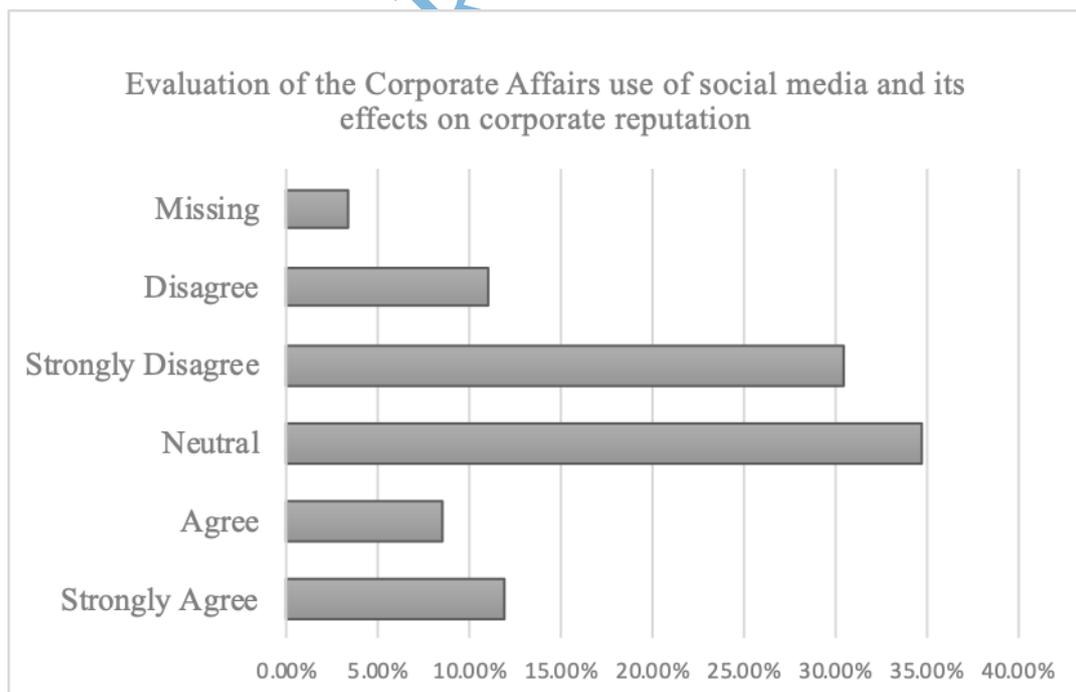


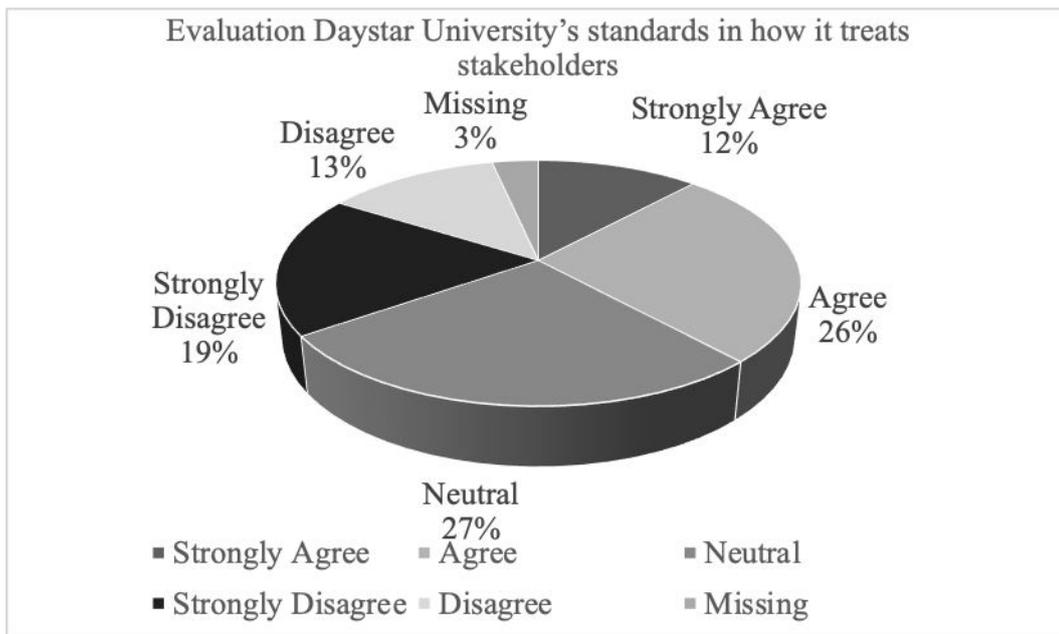
Figure 4.19: Corporate Affairs use of Social Media and Effects on the Reputation

When respondents were asked if through the efforts of the corporate affairs department on social media Daystar University had gained a favorable reputation on social media than it did before, 34.7% of the respondents chose to remain neutral. 41.5% of the respondents disagreed and 3.4% refrained from answering this question. 20.4% of the respondents agreed that Corporate Affairs social media usage improved its reputation. Most of the respondents 41.5 % believed the Daystar University has not earned a favorable reputation on social media.

Therefore, this means that the way in which the institution conducted itself on social media at the time of the crisis did not earn them a favorable reputation from the respondent's perspective. This could be because of the institution not engaging with the students online during the crisis and further deleting some of the posts that they had put up on social media.

#### Evaluation Daystar University's Standards in how it Treats Stakeholders

Figure 4.20 shows the respondents evaluation of Daystar University's standards and how they treat stakeholders.



*Figure 4.20: Daystar University's Standards in how it Treats Stakeholders*

When asked if Daystar University maintains high standards in the way it treats its stakeholders by keeping their communication channels open, 3.4% of the respondents refrained from answering the question and 27.1% opted to remain neutral. 31.3% of the respondents disagreed and 38.2% agreed with the that Daystar University maintains high standards with how they treat their stakeholders. This means that despite the crisis and the happenings on social media the respondents believe that Daystar University upholds their promise to meet their stakeholder needs. The finding is an indication that the students are content with how Daystar University treats them. This could be probably as a result in change of how things are run at the institution after the crisis. Despite this, the university should try and improve on their treatment of stakeholders because the number of respondents that are dissatisfied with the treatment was also high and this could be a prodrome to a future crisis if the issue is not addressed. Evaluation of Services Provided at Daystar University

Figure 4.21 below shows how the respondents evaluated the services provided by Daystar University.

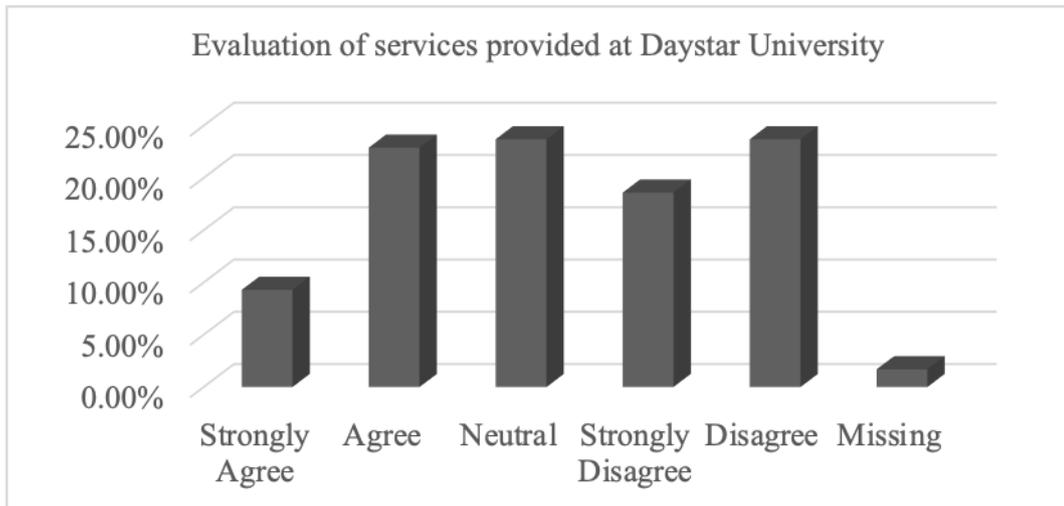


Figure 4.21: Services Offered at Daystar University are Good Value for Money

When asked if Daystar University offers education, amenities, and training that are good value for, 1.7% of the respondents refrained from answering this question. 42.3% of the respondents indicated that they did not agree with this statement, 32.3% of the respondents indicated that they agree and 23.7% chose to remain neutral when asked this question. This implies that respondents are dissatisfied by the services that the institution provides which was among the reasons the students unrest happened. The students had cited poor state of facilities and deteriorating of quality of education as reasons for the boycott. Therefore, the findings mean that organizations that do not strive to provide services that are not equal to what their clients are paying for are at a higher risk of experiencing a crisis or boycott to their products.

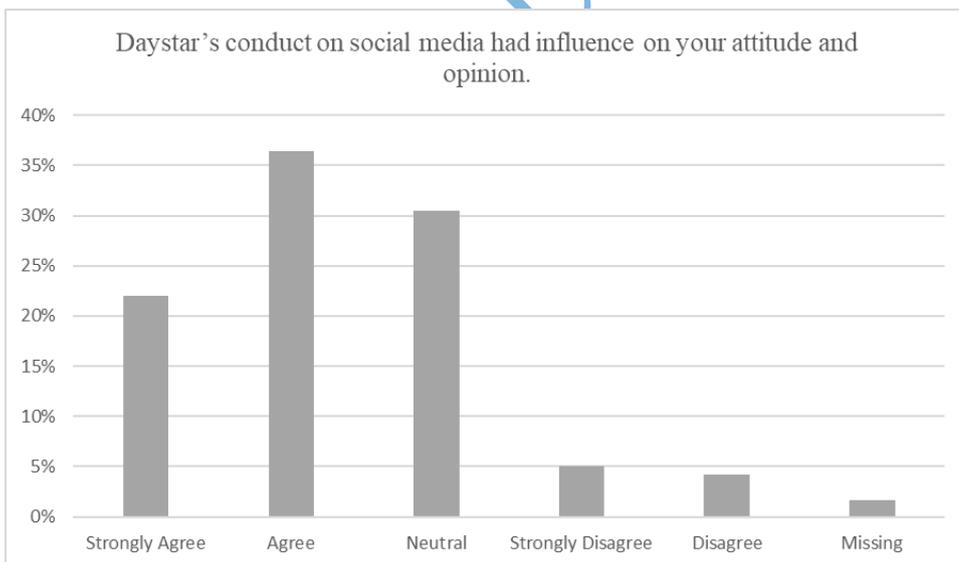
Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 was however of a different opinion and she stated as follows:

*As an institution we strive to give our students quality education, nurture talents, and provide opportunities for growth career wise, it is rather unfortunate that the management at the time of the strike had forgotten what the school stands for. The claims of the students were valid, and they were right to demand the great services we promise before joining the institution. The management at the time let the students down, but as an institution we have stepped up, as we speak, we are constructing a studio for the students, we want to ensure that we serve our students better.*

The findings mean that the institution acknowledged that the services they provided the students were not as per their expectations. This means that the university before and at the time of the crisis was not meeting the needs of their stakeholders in regard to the facilities at the institution and the quality of education and this resulted in the institution facing a crisis.

Evaluation of Daystar’s conduct on social media and its influence on perception

Figure 4.22 shows the evaluation of Daystar’s conduct on social media.



*Figure 4.22:Daystar University’s Conduct on Social Media Influenced my attitude*

When asked if the way Daystar University conducted itself on social media influenced their attitude and opinion towards the University, as a result of what they

read and observed at the time of the crisis 58.4% of the respondents agreed. 30.5% of the respondents chose to remain neutral and 9.3% of the respondents disagreed. 1.7% of the respondents refrained from giving an answer to the question.

These findings mean that the attitudes and opinions of majority of the respondents were affected by the way the institution conducted their communication on social media. The institution at the onset barely gave updates on the state of the crisis and further did not engage them on the said platforms and this may have been concluded as ignoring them. The institutions decision to also delete the social media posts may have resulted into this finding. The institution on their end indicate that it was impossible to reply to all the posts on social media as they were too many and that they deleted the posts to minimize the negative comments that they were receiving during the crisis. Organizations should therefore be careful of how they deal with their stakeholders on social media as they form opinions from what they observe and read from an organization's social media platforms. This means that organizations should begin to utilize social media appropriately during crises as they have the potential to tarnish or improve their reputation.

Findings from the interviews with Corporate Affairs members reveal that social media usage at the time of the crisis was a challenge.

Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 stated as below:

*We used the platform to monitor what was being said about us by the students and other stakeholders. We also used the platform to identify the issues the students were raising, and these issues guided us in finding ways to handle them, for instance the decision to not respond to the claims was guided by the negative online feedback, the need for conversation with the student leaders also emanated from our social media monitoring.*

However, social media usage was also a challenge as indicated by Interviewee three who stated as below:

*Through the posts made on social media by the students, their solidarity to the course was solidified and it was very difficult to reason with them on the mitigation measures to the crisis agreed upon by the university. The students also gained full support from other student bodies in other universities and also from their parents. The support in some way made the crisis escalate even further.*

The above findings imply that monitoring social media platforms during a crisis is essential as it may help the institution prevent further escalation of the crisis and help prevent reputational damage. The findings further imply that the usage of social media usage was a challenge for the institution, data from the interviews reveal that the information that was posted by the students on social media resulted in the institution facing tremendous challenges in managing the situation. Therefore, these findings show that social media has various disadvantages and thus organizations that decide to use the platforms for crisis communication should be prepared to handle the challenges that arise from online users.

#### Evaluation of Perception on Daystar University's Reputation

Figure 4.23 shows the evaluation of Daystar University perception.

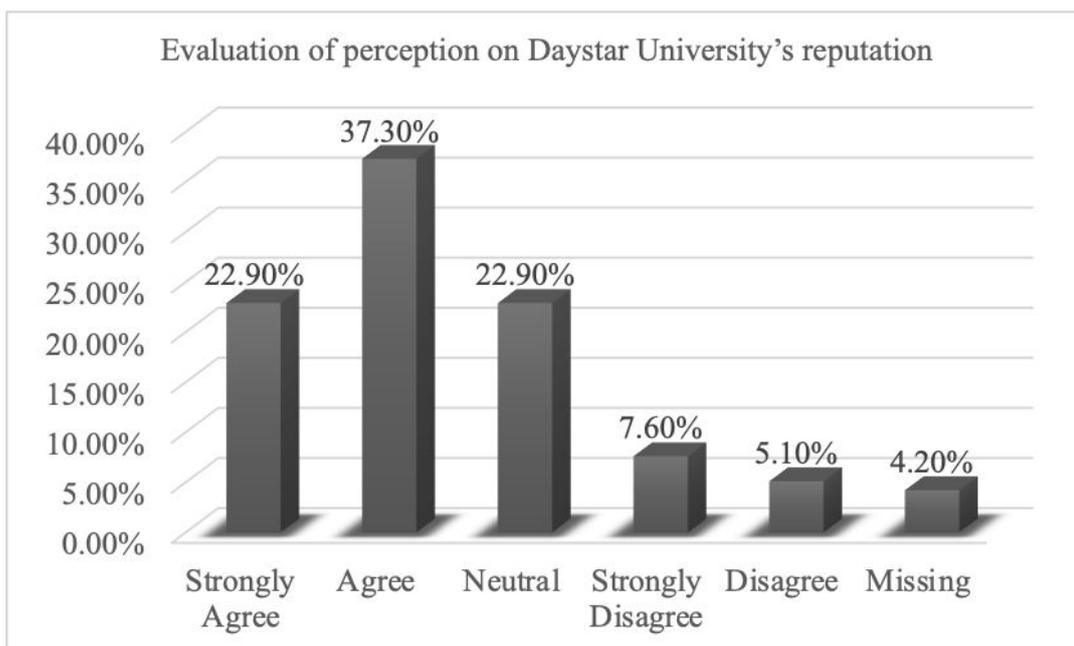


Figure 4.23: Perception Towards the Reputation of Daystar University

When respondents were asked if they had a positive perception towards the university after the crisis 60.2% agreed that they have a positive perception towards the university. 22.90% of the indicated that they were neutral, and 12.7% of the respondents disagreed when asked this question, 4.2% of the respondents refrained from answering this question. Despite the institution having a crisis that was highly publicized on social media, majority of the respondents indicated to have a positive perception about the university. This finding can be interpreted to mean that the university's prior reputational history may have been upheld among some of the students as they had seen significant changes in the institution since the time of the crisis.

However, findings from the interviews reveal that the institutions reputation was tainted as a result of the comments made on social media. Further, they reveal that support to the school and funding were the most affected by the crisis.

Respondent Corp/1/2/2019 stated as follows:

*We had some donors who pulled out as they were only being informed by the negative comments posted on social media, no one wants to be affiliated to an institution whose house is not in order, admissions were also adversely affected. Some students left the school and the number of new students registering for the next semester went down.” She further revealed “The popular Afrizzo band tour that happens annually did not take place as a result of the bad publicity that Daystar University had received on social media. Afrizzo band is used by the school as a marketing strategy.*

Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 opined that the reputation of the institution was tainted, and stated as follows:

*The institution faced grave damage as a result of the highly publicized crisis, we are still in the process of rebuilding.*

These findings from the interviews imply that social media is a very powerful communication tool which has the potential of damaging an institutions reputation. It also means that’s individuals’ perceptions can be easily swayed by what they read online about an institution and this may have been the case of some donors who witnessed the crisis as it unfolded online. The platforms have also transformed the world to a global village by enabling the information about the crisis to reach individuals outside Kenya. The findings also indicate the negative impacts of crises on an organization, for instance financial and stakeholder loss.

#### Crisis Communication Management at Daystar University During the 2017/2018 Crisis

The researcher also sought to find out how the university managed crisis communication during the 2017/2018 crisis. Data presented in this section was collected through in-depth interview with Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 who provided responses for the research question: How did Daystar University manage crisis communication during the 2017/2018 crisis? Findings from the interview gave the

researcher insights on how the institution handled the crisis communication during the 2017/2018 crisis.

Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 reveals that the institution developed a crisis communication plan that was designed to be used during the crisis. Despite having a crisis communication plan, a social media strategy was distinctively missing. The institution however used the social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, and the institutions website as feedback channels.

Respondent Corp/3/2/2019 stated as follows:

*We used these and continue to use them to monitor what stakeholders are saying for both anticipation, prevention, and response.*

This finding indicates that the University took the appropriate steps in dealing with a crisis by having a crisis communication plan in place to deal with the event.

Further the respondent reveals that after receiving a list of all the student's grievances between the months of September and October 2017, at a Student Baraza with VC and Management at Nairobi Campus. The grievances were compiled and the institution prepared response and communication on the grievances. The institution however did not immediately send out communication on the way forward or how they would handle the situation. This finding could imply that was institution could have been gathering and vetting the facts before they could communicate anything to their students. However, the lack of response and action from the institution resulted in the boycott of classes and the social media campaign by the students to try and probably get a reaction from the institution. This finding reveals that a lack of fast response can further the crisis as the stakeholders feel ignored and resort to seeking

crisis information elsewhere. The information they get from other sources may anger them further and result to an organization damaging its reputation.

The respondent further revealed that the institution proceeded to form a Crisis Management Team (CMT) on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017, the team comprised of the Vice Chancellor (VC), School Deans, Corporate Affairs manager, Public Relations Officer and they further hired a Crisis Communication Specialist. The team was tasked with planning on how to mitigate the crisis and advising the senate and the Ag. VC throughout the crisis. This finding means that the institution knows the value of a CMT and its ability to assist in deciding actions and developing strategies to mitigate a crisis swiftly. The respondent also revealed that the institution took a step to identify different spokespersons to communicate with different stakeholders and donors. The VC, or an individual that the VC designates, was selected as the spokesperson for the stakeholders in Kenya, the VC was also the spokesperson for Daystar University in the United States. The executive director of Daystar University in the United States was chosen as the spokesperson for the donors in the United States. This finding could be interpreted to mean that the institution was prepared to disseminate crisis information to their stakeholders and thus the selection of spokespersons.

The respondent additionally reveals that the CMT struggled to handle the crisis that the institution was facing because of the lack of trust by the students in the administration. Respondent Corp/3/3/2019 stated as follows:

*The VC and the Council Chair who were both caught up in the middle of the crisis allegations however made it strenuous for the institution to select an authority to respond to issues that were under investigation". Addressing staff, students, parents, and media satisfactorily did not effectively take off until the appointment of Ag. VC on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017.*

This finding reveals the challenges that arise when the leadership of an institution is accused of being responsible for a crisis. Studies have shown that organizations should not keep an individual onboard if potential damage outweighs value. This means that Daystar University could have taken the steps to remove the accused from the frontline of crisis management as they conducted investigations and managed the crisis. This also highlights the importance of trustworthy leadership during crisis management.

The institution further put up notification and monitoring platforms which included the platforms included Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, among others. Respondent 3/2/2019 stated as follows:

*We used these channels to monitor what stakeholders were saying for both anticipation, prevention, and response. We also used some limited recorded messages. However, we did not prepare any holding statements ahead of the crisis.*

This finding implies that social media sites are important during a crisis as they help to inform an organization on how to manage the issues. Messaging was also a challenge for the institution, as respondent Corp/1/2/2019 indicated as follows:

*Although we knew the type of information most of our stakeholders needed, it was difficult to distill key messages in the absence of appropriate responses to the questions asked.*

Therefore, this may have contributed to the crisis escalating further as those affected by the crisis were not receiving any information from the institution. In a crisis messages are considered vital as they help in distributing correct information and helps bridge the gap between what the stakeholders know and what they need to know from the organization.

Daystar University communicated with the key stakeholders using the institution's emails addresses, emails were sent out to the students, and memos were also put on the notice boards. Most of the emails can however only be traced to 2018, this finding could be interpreted to mean that there was a deficiency of communication to the students concerning the crisis. In December of 2017, the institution sent out a memo to stakeholders on the decisions to send the VC on a sabbatical leave and to announce the appointment of the Deputy Vice Chancellor as the Ag. Vice Chancellor.

The institution also announced it had launched investigations into the crisis and were expecting a forensic report by February 2018. The communication was done through memos that were sent to the students via email. The institution further sent press statements and briefings announcing the closure of the university. An email to all students and university community on the same announcement was similarly sent out by the institution. This was the second time the institution was being closed indefinitely. Therefore, this finding implies that a crisis is bound to reoccur if it was not resolved and if there exist any misunderstandings between those involved in the earlier crisis.

Findings from respondent/3/3/2019 reveal that it was after the VC was placed on sabbatical leave that proper crisis management kicked off.

Respondent/3/3/2019 stated as follows:

*A forensic investigation was commissioned immediately to look into the claims that had been brought forward by the students, this information was disseminated through school emails to the students.*

The respondent further reveals that consistent communication from the university started in 2018 after the second closure of the school and the institution used Infospot (The University newsletter) social media, public announcements on local dailies, press releases and press briefings in an effort to reach all their stakeholders. The findings imply that the university was under pressure because they had been forced to close the institution twice. It also implies the university changed their communication plan, because after the second wave of the crisis is when the institution focused more on public communication, where they included more communication channels and messages as opposed to when the crisis began. For instance, the information on the formation of the taskforce was done through a newspaper, social media, and the school magazine.

Respondent/3/3/2019 further stated as follows:

*The Company Board met and announced the appointment of a special taskforce to review the Forensic report, to reopen schools and investigate crisis and make recommendations to Trustees.*

Findings reveal that the institution opted for dialogue as a way of managing the crisis at the institution. The institution held various dialogue sessions between the conflicting parties in order to better understand the crisis. At the onset the student's association DUSA represented the students in the dialogue sessions. The institution also had several dialogue sessions with parents. Despite some of the dialogues not being successful, the findings reveal that they played a major role in reasoning with the students and their parents. For instance, a meeting between parents, students and the University to brief them on the progress of addressing students' issues flopped as they wanted to the Forensic Investigation report.

The delay in publicly releasing of the forensic report further mounted pressure and resulted in the second unrest, despite council indicating the report was for council decision making. The unrest reoccurred, and the school was closed indefinitely. This finding means that the crisis likely reoccurred because the institution was rigid in disseminating crisis information to their stakeholders. Once the crisis had subsided the institution had a crisis review period between March 2019 and June 2019. All stakeholder groups i.e. Students, Faculty, staff, Alumni Council, and company of the institution underwent sessions that purposed to hold dialogues and offer healing sessions for all those affected by the crisis. These sessions were aimed at rebuilding damaged relationships with their stakeholders and communicating action plans.

The institution also used the sessions as an avenue to evaluate, analyze, learn and share lessons from the crisis and identify initiatives and practices going forward. The sessions with the students were carried out in the school's campuses, Athi and Nairobi, the sessions with Faculty and staff including leaders of outsourced services were held in both campuses and that with the alumni was held at the Nairobi campus. These crisis post-mortem shows that the university were keen on building relationships and reputation that they believe was harmed in the process of the crisis. These sessions are vital for organizations that have experienced a crisis because they help rebuild confidence in the leadership of an organization.

#### Summary of Key Findings

Findings from quantitative analysis reveal that the students whose ages are between 18-25 are subscribed to social media sites and the most popular sites among the students were Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. It was also revealed

that most of the students follow Daystar University on Facebook and Twitter. The social media platform LinkedIn had the least number of followers. Despite a majority not posting on social media about the unrest, those that posted indicated that they used the social media platform Twitter to post about the student's unrest. Findings also reveal that at the time of the unrest, most of the students actively followed Daystar University on social media in the quest for communication or rather information on the crisis.

Findings further reveal that, most of them were generally dissatisfied by how the university used social media during the 2017/2018 crisis. This can be attributed to the no response or constant updates from the university at the time of the predicament. The no response or constant updates may have resulted in the respondents stating that Daystar University did not use social media effectively during the crisis. The university adopted a no response strategy and pulling down of already posted messages social media to avoid negative comments and the spread of the same. This can be attributed to findings from interviews that the institution lacked a defined social media strategy dedicated to handle crises.

The interviews further state that prior preparedness would have helped the institution deal with social media during the crisis. Generally during the crisis, social media platforms were used for monitoring and feedback purposes. Despite being challenging to use the respondents agreed that the platforms were beneficial to them as they utilized them for issue management. Social media usage was eventually fully put into use by the university after the second wave of the student's unrest and have continued to use the platforms to monitor for prodromes.

Findings from the qualitative analysis reveal that the university majorly utilized Emails, press releases, text messages, and press conferences to convey messages to the students and other stakeholders at the time of the crisis. The institution had however drafted messages for their stakeholders, but they could not be disseminated because of lack of trust of the statements from administration. The communication, however, was not as consistent and enough, and the parents were communicated to way later into the crisis. Findings also reveal that dialogues were preferred form of communication by the institution as a means of solving the crisis at the institution but most of the times the dialogues failed.

Findings from the qualitative interviews further reveal that in managing crisis communication, the institution went ahead to form a CMT to help them tackle the issues. The students further believe that the leadership at the institution at the time of the crisis was problematic and this may have contributed to the crisis lasting more than three months and resulting in a reoccurrence. This is corroborated by the respondents who mentioned a lack of trust in the administration during the crisis. The respondents indicated that proper communication commenced almost three months into the crisis after the VC who was the CMT lead was placed on sabbatical leave. Communication between the student's leaders and the new management was done in closed door discussions and this resulted in the school hiring a forensic audit firm to investigate the crisis and the claims of the students.

A report from the forensic further, which was later withheld from the students and resulting in a second unrest, confirmed student's claims. An independent taskforce was later appointed to handle the crisis that was happening at Daystar University. Harris-Fombrum's reputation quotient (RQ) lists social responsibility,

emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, financial performance, and workplace environment as some of the measures of corporate reputation. Generally, the findings reveal that the reputation of Daystar University is not favorable among the students, this is according to the quotient.

The students are of the opinion that there was no clear leadership at the institution during the crisis, they also state that the Daystar University did not take responsibility for the crisis. Further, they are of the opinion that the Daystar University's conduct during the crisis was not aligned with what they say about themselves and they do not think Daystar University can handle social media crises. Finally, the students reveal that the institution does not offer services that are value for their money. Findings from qualitative interviews also reveal that the institution indeed suffered reputational damage as a result of the crisis. This was evident from donors cutting funding and to the low admission rates at the institution. Findings also indicate that the institution is still in the process of rebuilding the reputation of its brand.

When asked what suggestions they had for the university in order to make their online communication better some of the overriding suggestions included; ensuring that they constantly update information on their online platforms and not to wait until the university faces a crisis to churn out information there and ensuring that the information that is put up on their social media platforms is truthful and conclusive so that everyone understands what is happening. In addition, some respondents indicated that social media is interactive in nature, but the university was not being interactive on their social media platforms by responding to individuals' comments on their posts. There was also the suggestion that the university should join

the social media platforms that most of the students are subscribed to. In addition, some respondents suggested that the university should have a WhatsApp number for communication purposes, as it popular. The respondents also indicated that the use of e-mails only was an impediment to communication since some of them accessed the information late of did not access the information at, a multimedia approach to share information was suggested.

### Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study based on the data collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The chapter has also analyzed and made interpretations to establish key findings of the study, which will be discussed further in Chapter five based on the study objectives and theoretical perspectives made in chapter two.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The previous chapter described the analysis of data and interpretation gathered from interviews and questionnaires. Discussions, conclusions, and recommendations of the research findings in relation to the study purpose, objectives and research questions are presented in this chapter. The SCCT and the SMCM that were discussed in the second chapter were used to make conclusions for this study. In addition, the discussions, and conclusions for objective one and two relied on both qualitative and quantitative data. However, for objective three the discussion and conclusion relied on the qualitative data which was in-depth interviews with members of the Corporate Affairs Department.

#### Discussions of Key Findings

The key findings of the study were discussed under subtitles based on the objectives of the study. They were follows:

##### How social Media was Used During the 2017/2018 Daystar University Crisis

Findings revealed that Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube were the most utilized sites by the students in their day to day life. The use of social media could be attributed to the younger generation being heavily exposed to digital technologies and the internet (DeCosmo, 2019). Demographic data from the study indicated that most of the students are between 18-25 years, which is essentially categorized as the younger generation. Seemingly, the Daystar University student's unrest was unique as compared to unrests in other Kenyan institutions of higher learning, for instance,

Nairobi University student strikes, and unrests are characterized by the students taking to the streets to hurl stones to protest their dissatisfaction with different services. In the case of Daystar, the students opted for a silent protest and social media usage to air their grievances. The use of social media could also be an indication of a new form of strikes in Kenyan institutions of higher learning. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should harness the power of these new technologies that are popular among the students.

When it came to the respondents using social media to post about the unrest, an average number indicated that they used the sites. Despite not posting on social media a majority 52% indicated that they used social media to seek information on the student's unrest as it unfolded on social media. This finding corroborates with that of Wang and Dong (2017) that in times of crises, publics often seek for credible coverage of crises via social media. Similarly, a study conducted by Abdul Hamid, Ishak, Ismail, & Mohamad Yazam, (2013) in Malaysia to determine the purpose of social media use among university students, it was revealed that 87.95% used social media to search for information.

The study was however not based on a crisis, so it could not be used to make conclusions for a crisis. Therefore, findings from this study can be used to conclude that university students may use social media to air out their grievances and to seek for crisis information. Moreover, this study has proven the vitality of organizations faced with crisis utilizing social media as a channel for information dissemination. This is because the younger generation are subscribed to most social media platforms and spend significant amount of time on the platforms, thus are likely to receive information when it is disseminated via these platforms.

Additionally, findings from qualitative analysis revealed that the institution used Facebook to send out information about the crisis. The institution hoped to reach a bigger audience since they had a bigger following on the platform. This was despite the students utilizing both Facebook and Twitter to post information about the unrest, thus the institution should have purposed to use both platforms to communicate as their target audience were on the two platforms.

This finding is supported by Coombs and Holladay (2012), who emphasize that a social media platform that reaches your target audience creates value during a crisis. However, as the crisis escalated, Twitter was adopted as a communication platform confirming that the University may have noted the blunder in the first wave and corrected themselves. Twitter has been stated to be the most appropriate platform to use during a crisis as it provides faster responses and enables immediate feedback (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). This study thus showed the importance of selecting an appropriate social media channel to use in case of a crisis and the general importance of organizations using appropriate social media sites in their crisis management.

Further findings revealed that the institution lacked a proper social media strategy for the crisis, therefore the researcher holds the views that the institution was not sufficiently prepared for the predicament. A social media strategy is a fundamental aspect of a communication strategy, it is a well thought out plan that involves time, budget and includes a set of goals and a plan of action by an organization (Crawley, 2018). Lack of a proper social media strategy during the crisis was proven by a lack of constant updates on the crisis, not responding to social media posts by students and the deleting of posts on the platforms in an attempt to stop the negative comments under their posts and prevent reputational damage.

Deleting of social media posts by an organization that is facing a crisis reflects poor handling of the crisis. Findings showed that the institution deleted some of the posts they had put up with an aim of ceasing the negative comments. However, the action reflected a lack of transparency from the institution. Lack of transparency may have cost the institution their credibility because during a crisis transparency is mandatory. In the case of Daystar University, withholding information from the students portrayed a lack of transparency. The importance of transparency and credibility is emphasized by Nikolaev (2010) who stated that an organizations management needs to respond and react rapidly; information has to be successfully managed and given out simultaneously to all affected parties, to encourage the sustainability of its credibility (Nikolaev, 2010). Therefore, the university should have selected an appropriate social media strategy that best suited their crisis from the six strategies recommended by Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016) to appropriately handle the crisis.

From the findings, the researcher concluded that the institution used the egocentric strategy in communication during the crisis. Organizations that adopt the strategy share information with their stakeholders through social media but at no point will they engage in conversation with them (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). The respondents however did not find the strategy appropriate as they indicated that they would have preferred if they interacted with their posts on social media. An ideal social media strategy would be a mix of Openness, Conversational and Secretive. Openness suggests that an institution in a crisis openly puts out communication about the crisis to their stakeholders, this would have displayed transparency on the institutions part. Conversational would also have been ideal, this strategy proposes that organizations

reply to all remarks shared by customers to launch a dialogue and deal with any conflict. The strategy assists in quickly countering claims that are made online and can help in preventing a crisis from escalating (Floreddu & Cabiddu, 2016). Since some crisis information can be sensitive, the secretive strategy would have been ideal as it allows an organization to reply to complains through other channels like emails or calling the distraught stakeholder to resolve the issues.

Moreover, the lack of a social media strategy may have contributed to the escalation of the crisis on social media. Findings revealed that the comments made on social media which the institution termed as “noise” drowned the voice of reason and the students gaining full support of parents and student bodies from other universities who got involved in institutions crisis. The researcher is of the opinion that, if Daystar University had a proper social media strategy, they would have been capable of containing the issues before getting out of hand.

This conclusion agreed with Owyang and Lovett (2010) who emphasized on the need for organizations to develop an all-inclusive social media strategy to prevent stumbling and at worst being entirely consumed by social media. The institution however used social media to make decisions on issue management as they had set up Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp for monitoring what was being said about them online during the crisis, the issues captured online were noted and taken to the closed-door discussions with the students’ leaders. The findings revealed that the institution considered recommendations made by Jiang, Luo, and Kulumeka (2016), to use social media during crises to filter out the key concerns of their stakeholders and address them accordingly.

Despite not having a social media strategy, findings reveal that the institution initially put out messages on Facebook. The institution posted positive and reassuring messages without directly addressing the crisis, this action by the institution uncovered that the institution utilized the accommodative response strategy as recommended in Coombs SCCT. A study conducted by Modeus et al. (2012) emphasized that message content is an essential factor in successfully using the platforms during crises. Before posting any messages, online crisis managers ought to consider the publics who shall consume the information and their response to it. The messages were however met with negative comments from the students, this could be attributed to institution not honoring any of the requests they had put out. Messages put out by organizations are more likely to be accepted by stakeholders if their requests are honored, since communication is a two-way process (Coombs, 2007a).

Findings from the study indicated that the number of negative posts put out on social media by the students and other online users made it difficult for the institution to respond. This has been noted as one of the downsides of utilizing social media during a crisis. Hundreds of online users can chime into discussions resulting in hundreds of comments which organization may deem hard to manage (Kaul et al., 2015). When handling social media crises, organizations need to have online presence to sufficiently engage with its clients. (Argenti,2013) argued that this is to plummet the possibility of other stakeholder's opinions being swayed by the posts. The ability to engage the clients through the comments could be attributed to the presence of a proper social media plan.

The SMCM posits that during, before and after a crisis there exist three kinds of publics who consume and create information on social media: the content creators

who create communication that can be access by others; followers, those who follow the creators for information and the social media in actives that get the information from other sources, they are known to come to contact with the information indirectly (Jin & Liu, 2010). Daystar University followed recommendations of the SMCM which stipulates that organizations should be aware of the different social media users during a crisis and be able to handle them accordingly. The institution being aware that the matter propelled further as a result of the followers, some of whom were not directly affected by the crisis resorted to not engage with them online and opted to send communication via other channels.

About dissemination of information and speed of response, by the institution, the students are of the opinion that the university did not handle the predicament well. Therefore, this could mean that the university was ill prepared for the crisis. The students hoped for timely and accurate information to be disseminated via social media, but this was not the case. This finding could be attributed to Daystar University not giving liberal stakeholders more attention. This finding is supported by Argenti (2013) who states that the strength of an organization's reputation is determined by how they manage their communication with their stakeholders. This may have contributed to some of the respondents perceiving the institution reputation negatively. Further, the findings confirm Ryschka et al. (2016) study which opined that speed of response was validated as being of great importance to the perception of reputation. This study therefore emphasizes the obligation to issue information on a timely basis.

In conclusion, the findings on social media usage by the students agreed with the literature reviewed for this study, however social media usage by Daystar

University was not in line with most recommendations by literature on effective social media usage during a crisis to avert the negative influences. This was evident from questionnaire findings which evaluated Daystar's use of social media as unsatisfactory. Social media usage by an organization is beneficial to those affected and to the organization experiencing the crisis.

#### Examine Crisis Communication Management During the 2017/2018 Crisis

This study was guided by the SCCT which posits that a crisis dictates the selection of crisis response strategy based on crisis responsibility level and reputational threat (Coombs, 2007a). SCCT is based on three fundamentals: the crisis, the crisis response strategies (CRS) and a technique for harmonizing the CRS and the crisis. The study focused on how the institution managed crisis communication at the time of the crisis. Crisis communication according to Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), aims at plummeting uncertainty about the concerns that come up during a crisis.

Findings indicated that the institution adhered to some of the steps that organizations should follow in the event of a crisis as stipulated by Coombs (2006). First is the anticipation stage, where organizations should anticipate a crisis and develop a crisis management plan. In the anticipation stage, the institution submitted a vulnerability audit with a list of all student grievances received between September and October 2017. At this stage, the institution should have gone forth to ensure that they prevented and prepared for the crisis. In their preparation the institution already had a crisis management plan as stipulated in the institutions communication policy.

Having a crisis management plan is essential in crisis communication and management and these sentiments are echoed by a study by Modeus et al. (2012) who concluded that to manage a crisis organization needs to have a crisis plan in place. It is, however, vital to note that a crisis management plan does not equate to crisis communication plan. Daystar University, with their possession of a crisis communication plan, had the capacity to manage the crisis effectively.

The institution further formed a CMT to ensure that the issues pertaining to the crisis were addressed. Findings revealed that the team suffered major setback in trying to manage crisis communication due to lack of proper leadership, hence the prolonging of the crisis. Leadership is vital in offering focus, overview, uniting employees and spearheading an organization throughout the crisis (Ulmer et al., 2011). The university VC and University Council chair who were both very crucial to the university were caught up in the crisis and were unable to hold successful meetings with the students, one of the demands given by the students was the resignation of the VC. The institution however chose to maintain the leadership for a few months after the complaints were tabled, and hindered proper communication to employees, students, parents, and media for close to three months, until a new acting VC was appointed.

These findings are similar to that of a study done by Heath (2010), who notes that the containment stage of the United Way of America crisis was prolonged because the board failed to ask the CEO to resign, the CEO had been accused of overzealous spending. This further resulted in other United Agencies losing out on donations to enable them to operate. Based on this research, it is imperative to note that forming a CMT, as much as is a crucial step in managing crisis, can be useless if

their performance is hindered by other underlying causes like leadership, thus institutions in a crisis should ensure that a CMT fulfill their intended roles by providing a conducive environment for crisis management.

The second stage of crisis is the crisis itself and this where the SCCT comes in. SCCT emphasizes that understanding the crisis and the amount of reputational threat posed by the crisis is essential in determining the most effective crisis response. Reputational threat which is the amount of damage a crisis could inflict on an organization if no action is taken to respond to it. Findings revealed that during the crisis the institution's choice of CRS was denial, evading responsibility and reducing offensiveness. The researcher is of the opinion that the choice of the three strategies was misguided. Organizations that adopt the denial strategy deny performing the act that holds them responsible for the crisis.

This strategy is however only effective if the organization in question did not do what they have been accused of (Coombs, 2007). However, if an organization denies the claim but investigation proves that indeed they were responsible, this can lead to damaged reputation (Zaremba, 2010). A study by Kim, Avery and Lariscy (2009) found in their public relations research from 1991 to 2009 using SCCT. They noted that denial was the least effective strategy based on the crisis outcome, despite it being the most utilized among corporations. This means that Daystar University did not consider advice from such research in their crisis management efforts.

Information about crisis is often sent out to the stakeholders through different communication channels (Zaremba, 2010), this is similar to findings of this study which revealed that Daystar University utilized different communication channels to disseminate information. Despite the inconsistency of sending updates, the institution

used memos via email to the students, press releases for the parents and external stakeholders, text messages to the parents, social media to the students and press conferences to reach other external stakeholders. From the findings Social media seemed as a more effective platform as majority of the school's population being the younger generation would have seen the communication as they spend considerable time on social media.

Findings further revealed that the institution refrained from touching on the reasons for the boycott and the students' grievances. For instance, a press release announcing the closure of the institution cited the boycott by the students and failed to touch on the crisis at the institution. The institution did not adhere to SCCT recommendations by Ashcroft (1997), that when a crisis occurs there is an urgency from stakeholders to be updated on the actions an organization is taking to deal with the crisis. The lack of inadequacy of communication from the institution during this period reflects on the competency of the organization (Wooten & James, 2005). As a result of delay or inadequate communication, the crisis escalated.

Crises in organizations are characterized by high magnitude uncertainties, the higher the doubt regarding the resolution of a situation, the more severe the crisis. This is because during crises there are so many unknown details (Mitroff, 2005). In the case of Daystar University, the management needed to request the students to file a formal complaint for further action in order to address the matters raised. This forensic report would then guide the direction the university would take in handling the crisis. This view is supported by Mitroff (2005), who states that during a crisis ethical and technical uncertainties exist that dictate what one should do, particularly with regard to the amount of responsibility one should accept from the beginning. The

universities decision to investigate the crisis before handling crisis was commendable but the researcher opines that it should have been done as soon as the student grievances were presented to the institution and not after the crisis was already full blown. The forensic report would have come in handy as a containment of the crisis.

In conclusion, some of the findings on examining crisis communication management during the crisis at Daystar University agree with what is stipulated in SCCT though institution in some instances chose a different approach and this may have made their management ineffective. Further findings indicated that the denial strategy is not ideal for organizations that are responsible for a crisis, accommodative strategies have been proven to work in cases where an organization is responsible for a crisis. Nevertheless, organizations should still use Coombs SCCT as it has been proven to work. An appropriate strategy should be selected by an organization based on the stakeholder's attribution to a crisis.

#### Effect of Social Media Usage During The 2017/2018 Crisis on The Corporate Reputation of Daystar University

Corporate reputation is based on the evaluation by a stakeholder on the ability of an organization to meet their needs (Coombs, 2012). Findings from the interviews with members of the Corporate Affairs Department at Daystar University indicate that the reputation of the institution was tainted as a result of the negative posts shared on social media by the students. This finding is similar to that of Tripp and Gregoire (2011) study on United Airlines, which concluded that a single displeased client could cause reputational damage via social media, as the corporation suffered a bad reputation. The students exposed what they termed as the rot at the institution as a

result of being at loggerheads with the management. Regardless of the information being true or false, the opinions of some stakeholders were affected.

This was evident from the fact that the interviewees agreed that when they carried out their usual fundraising projects after the strike had come to an end, some donors refrained from donating money to the institution, stating that they had lost trust in how their funds were being put to use as per the claims on social media. They insist that the institution was still in the process of rebuilding their reputation two years after the strike took place. The study findings are similar to those in Heath (2010) in which some United Way Agencies ended up not receiving donations to operate as the CEO had been accused of mismanaging funds.

Further, according to the Corporate Affairs Department, the reputation of the institution was tainted, this was confirmed by the decrease in the number of admissions in the next semester, this was a result of some parents opting to transfer their children to other institutions. The parents who opted to transfer their students to other institutions, according to the Corporate Affairs, cited the negativity posted online as a trigger for their actions. This finding thus confirms that negative social media comments from individuals have an impact on organizations reputations and therefore they should strive to ensure that such information can be contained before it reaches other stakeholders who may not be directly affected by the crisis.

The similarity in findings gives greater validity to the researchers' findings and it means that the conclusions can be used to generalize for the whole population. According to Li and Bernoff (2012) social media functioning is beyond the organizations control and influence thus there was little the institution could have done that would have stopped the retweeting and sharing of the posts shared on social

media. However, the researcher is of the opinion that, if the student's grievances had been addressed before, then the social media crisis would have been avoided. Further, the reputation damage could be avoided if organizations endeavored to offer services that are up to the customer's standards to avoid such incidents on social media.

However, it is important to note that despite the findings from the Corporate Affairs Department, which indicate that the institutions reputation was tarnished as a result of the comments posted on social media by the students at the time of the crisis, quantitative data indicated that respondents have a positive perception towards the reputation of Daystar University regardless of how the institution performed on social media. These findings reflect the position posited by Grutzmacher (2011) on Nokia Corporation, which points out that users are not necessarily influenced by an organization's social media activities but adds that social media can influence them to form a negative or positive reputation about an organization.

The researcher concludes that the positive perception by the students may also be because of other factors including post-crisis communication and the time of study bearing in mind the difference between the period the study was carried out and when the strike to place is two years. This finding could be an indication of a disconnect between the institution and its stakeholders. As a result, the researcher notes the need to conduct additional studies in order to examine their reputation from these stakeholders. These studies might assist the institution in coming up with ways of aligning its reputation to all its stakeholders.

In conclusion the findings for this objective to an extent agree with literature reviewed on the effect on social media usage on corporate reputation. This is because

it is evident from the institution's Corporate Affairs that there was significant damage to the reputation.

### Conclusion

From the study, it is evident that social media usage among the respondents was average in terms of posting about the student's unrest. However, a majority of the respondents indicated that they used their social media to check for information from the institution about the unrest. It is also evident that Daystar University did not satisfactorily use social media for communication during the 2017/2018 student's unrest. This was because majority of the students indicated neither receiving constant updates, the right amount of information nor their grievances being responded to online. For a social media crisis, crisis managers must respond hastily and provide facts to counter the claims, this helps in calming the situation online and to a larger extent contain the situation as the institution manages the crisis.

Social media is also essential as it provides an avenue for crisis managers to identify prodromes. The selection of social media platform to use should be determined by the audience the organization purposes to reach. If the complains are emanating from Twitter, the organization should prioritize the specific platform in disseminating their responses. The researcher also holds the view that message framing should be prioritized to fit the needs of the stakeholder, this may assist in containing the crisis.

A comprehensive social media communication strategy is vital for any institution. The strategy should be formulated beforehand to prevent an organization being ambushed and overwhelmed by the crisis. The strategy should be part of the

crisis communication plan; the researcher suggests that the strategy be tested through a mock crisis to enable the organization to evaluate its functionality. It is evident that a social media strategy was missing in action during the 2017/2018 crisis. As a result, institution was overwhelmed and ceased using the platforms. Social media has been fully embraced as a channel of communication at the institution and they now engage in conversation with the students on the platforms, this means that the crisis provided an opportunity for the institution to evaluate their communication during and rectify where they lacked. Constant and timely updates have been observed from the institution. These findings provide invaluable insight for the use of social media as a medium of crisis communication.

Proper management of a crisis helps in improving and safeguarding the reputation of an organization. Crisis communication is an essential aspect of crisis management and effective communication can prevent the prolonging of a crisis in an organization. The communication should be quick especially in the early stages of a crisis as this may help the organization in containing the looming crisis. Constant updates are key when handling crises as the stakeholders feel less abandoned and cared for, aspects which were significantly lacking in Daystar's crisis communication. In the case of leadership, it is vital for organizations facing a crisis to have leaders who can help them through and out of a crisis. Problems emanating from leadership may prolong crises and it is advisable to let another individual lead the organization in order to save the reputation of the organization.

The researcher supposes that the leadership at the institution at the time of the crisis was a setback in their crisis communication and management. Furthermore, the choice of denial, evading responsibility and reducing offensiveness response strategy

in the case of Daystar University was not ideal as the crisis was a result of the schools' shortcomings. The researcher is of the opinion that corrective action would suffice in such a situation, in that, they admit that they are responsible for the crisis and move forward to solving it. Mortification could also be utilized whereby the institution apologizes for the crisis and restore things to normalcy that way (Benoit, 1997). These response strategies have been provided by SCCT.

The researcher holds the view that if Coombs SCCT was adequately consulted by the institution an appropriate response strategy would have been selected. The SMCM on the other hand would have enabled the institution to identify the different social media publics and the most appropriate response strategy to utilize when a crisis began internally. In the case of Daystar, the SMCM suggested the accommodative crisis response strategies. In conclusion this study provides evidence to Coombs arguments on the impact of perceived crisis responsibility on the choice of response strategy. It provides evidence for Kim, Avery, and Lariscy (2009) study that specialists do not consider counsel created by scholarly research (Sterne, 2008), which is proven by the choice of crisis response strategy by Daystar University.

From the study findings it is evident that social media has an impact on corporate reputation, this is because what is posted on the social media platforms about an institution is most likely to reach large masses of people across the globe, this is because these sites have converted the world into a global village. Information shared on any social media platforms spreads very fast to people on and off social media. Regardless of the issues being internal they can be publicized on social media platforms thus reaching other external stakeholders, which was the case at Daystar University. Most donors were made aware of the issues at the institution as a result of

the issue trending online. This resulted in some of them changing their position regarding the funds they were donating to the school, low admissions, and transfers to other institutions of higher learning. This research therefore points out the need to prevent issues from escalating on social media and the importance of social media in reputation forming and management.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations will serve as guidelines to assist institutions of higher learning on handling social media crises:

Daystar University and other institutions of higher learning who do not have well defined social media strategies should develop one and effectively implement them before, during and after a crisis. The strategy helps the institutions maintain a positive reputation with their stakeholders. Since this research has proven the evolution of crises in institution of higher learner, the researcher recommends the need for institutions of higher learning to be present on social media to establish a relationship with their stakeholders. The social media platforms may also be utilized to monitor for potential threats and conflicts and deal with them before they morph into a full-blown crisis. Other corporate organizations are constantly monitoring and evaluating content on social to help them identify any prodromes for future crises.

As publics are increasingly taking to social media to seek and share information during crises, organizations responding to crises on social media should offer rapid respond, accurate information with facts and give direction on what the institution is doing to solve the concerns raised by the publics. Since social media is prone to spread half-truths it is imperious for crisis managers responding to crisis on

social media to monitor and swiftly provide the correct information. Organizations should meet the needs of the media and remain accessible. They should also strive to build positive relationships with the stakeholders and the public as this comes in handy.

When it comes to choosing a response strategy the researcher is of the opinion that the SCCT crisis response strategies can be adopted and tweaked to meet an organization needs when managing crisis communication on social media platforms, the strategies can be structured in a manner that will fit the crisis the institution is handling. The organizations can also study the different categories of their publics beforehand to ensure that their communication reaches all of them. However, the choice of strategy should be based on the level of crisis attributed to the institution. For social media, the initial response is considered key. Denial, offensiveness reduction and responsibility evasion will however not be ideal for institutions of higher learning who are responsible for the crisis.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The following suggestions for further research were proposed:

1. This study focused on the assessment of social media usage during a crisis and the effect it had on corporate reputation in a private institution of higher learning. This means the findings could only be recognized in private institutions of higher learning. Further research can be carried out to establish the same in public institutions of higher learning.

2. The researcher proposes a content analysis study to be conducted focusing on the messages shared by the students to analyze how the students and the institution used social media during the crisis and the effects on corporate reputation.
3. This research based its conclusions on corporate reputation from the Corporate Affairs point of view. However, it would be relevant to establish the views of Daystar University's external stakeholders. Such a research would be ideal as it would help the institution know how its viewed by others and if there is a need to change the views.
4. Further research can also be conducted to establish the advantages and disadvantages of using social media as a channel of communication during a crisis
5. Additionally, a research can also be conducted to establish the effectiveness of dialogue as a crisis management strategy.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I, Mavis Eleanor Manyasa, a Master of Arts Student from Daystar University is conducting a research titled: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION DURING CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 CRISIS AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY as a requirement to fulfill this course. Therefore, I request your assistance in responding to the questions as they will be helpful completing this research. Note that this research is purely for academic purposes and it is also voluntary. Your responses will be highly confidential. Thank you so much for taking you time participate in this exercise.

**Please tick where appropriate**

**A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. GENDER (Kindly tick appropriately)
  - Male
  - Female
2. What is your age? (Kindly tick appropriately)
  - 18-25 years
  - 26-35 years
  - 36-45 years
  - 46-55 years
  - 56 and above
3. What is your level of study?
  - Diploma
  - Undergraduate
4. What Campus do you attend?
  - Nairobi
  - Athi River
5. What social media platforms do you use?

No.	Social Media Platform	Tick all that Apply
i.	Facebook	
ii.	Twitter	
iii.	Instagram	
iv.	Pinterest	
v.	YouTube	
vi.	Flickr	

vii.	LinkedIn	
viii.	Other	

6. Do you follow Daystar University on any Social Media platform?

No.	Social Media Platform	(✓) Tick all that Apply
i.	Facebook	
ii.	Twitter	
iii.	Instagram	
iv.	Pinterest	
v.	YouTube	
vi.	Flickr	
vii.	LinkedIn	
viii.	Other	
ix.	Do not Follow Any	

7. Did you use any of the social media platforms to post about the student's unrest?

No.	Social Media Platform	(✓) Tick all that Apply
	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	Instagram	
	Pinterest	
	YouTube	
	Flickr	
	LinkedIn	
	Other	
x.	Did not Use Any	

8. If you follow Daystar University on social media did you actively follow them during the unrest for information about the student's unrest?

- Yes, I did follow
- No, I did not follow

9. Indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree or are Neutral to the following statements:

Please tick (✓) one appropriate box for each statement.

Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD
Daystar's usage of social media during the crisis was satisfactory in terms of speed, clarity of information and					

constant updates.					
The grievances raised on social media were addressed by the university on social media during the 2017/2018 crisis.					
Daystar University effectively used social media to communicate during the 2017/2018 crisis.					
The right amount of information was delivered at the right time and through the appropriate channels during the crisis.					
I had faith in the way Daystar University managed the crisis on social media and their management of future crises.					

10. Indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree or are Neutral to the following statements:

Please tick (✓) one appropriate box for each statement.

The findings are presented in the following table:

Factors	SA	A	N	D	SD
The University conducted was consistent with what they say about themselves.					
Daystar University took responsibility for the crisis that happened in 2017/2018.					
Daystar University had clear leadership and vision during the 2017/2018 crisis.					
Daystar University is capable of handling social media crises.					
Corporate affairs department efforts on social media earned a better reputation					
Daystar University maintains high standards in the way it treats its stakeholders.					
Daystar University offers services that are good value for money					
Daystar University conducted on social media had an effect on your attitude and opinions					
I have a positive perception towards the reputation of Daystar University					

11. Suggest one way the University can make their online communication better.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

#### Appendix B: Interview Guide

I, Mavis Eleanor Manyasa, a Master of Arts Student from Daystar University is conducting a research titled: ASSESSEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION DURING CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 CRISIS AT DAYSTAR UNIVERISTY as a requirement to fulfill this course. Therefore, I request your assistance in offering 20-30 minutes of your time for interview to responding to questions relevant to this study. Note that this research is purely for academic purposes and it is also voluntary. Your responses will be highly confidential. Thank you so much for taking you time participate in this interview.

1. What are your duties/responsibilities in the Corporate Affairs Department?
2. Where is corporate communications placed in the organizational structure of Daystar University?
3. How much budget is allocated to communication functions and activities?
4. What are the components of the communication strategy used by Daystar University?
5. Do you use social media for communicating with the stakeholders? Provide answers for both YES and NO. If YES, how has Daystar University integrated social media into their communication strategy?
6. How does Daystar University use social media platforms to engage with its stakeholders?
7. Who are the stakeholders you engage with on social media?
8. Who manages your social media platforms, do they have policies and guidelines to manage them?
9. Does the institution have a crisis management plan with instructions about what to do in the event of a crisis?
10. Is social media included in the plan?
11. How did you handle the 2017/2018 crisis at the institution?
12. How do you rate the crisis management strategy used during the 2017/2018 crisis?
13. How did you handle negative comments on social media and why?

14. Explain the social media strategy that guides how you interact with stakeholders on social media? Any strategy(ies) you used during the student's unrest and why?
15. How important is the monitoring and evaluation of your social media platforms, especially during and after crisis?
16. How has social media usage affected Daystar University's reputation management plan, especially during crisis?
17. Did social media help the institution during the crisis?
18. What are some of the challenges the university faced in an attempt to manage the crisis on social media?
19. What would you have done differently in regard to social media management during a crisis?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

## Appendix C: Ethical Clearance



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[www.daystar.ac.ke](http://www.daystar.ac.ke)

**REF: DU-ERB/03/10/ 2019 /000356**

Date: 03-10-2019

TO: Mavis Eleanor Manyasa

Dear Mavis,

**RE: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION DURING CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 CRISIS AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY**

This is to inform you that Daystar University Ethics Review Board has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **DU-ERB-000356**. The approval period is **3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019 – 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2020**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Daystar University Ethics Review Board
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Daystar University Ethics Review Board within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Daystar University Ethics Review Board.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



**Purity Kiambi**  
Secretary, ERB

\*...until the day dawn and the daystar

Appendix D: Research Permit

  
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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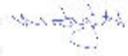
**RESEARCH LICENSE**



**This is to Certify that Miss. MAVIS MANYASA of Daystar University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION DURING A CRISIS: A CASE OF 2017/2018 CRISIS AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY. for the period ending : 16/October/2020.**

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## Appendix E: Plagiarism Report

## Mavis Manyasa thesis - 27.10.2020

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# Mavis Manyasa thesis - 27.10.2020

*by Mavis Manyasa*

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**Character count:** 212627

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