

IMPACT OF OPINION LEADERS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF KIPETO ENERGY, KENYA

by

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APPROVAL

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A CASE STUDY OF KIPETO ENERGY, KENYA

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DECLARATION

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
KPLC	Kenya Power Lighting Company
SDG	Sustainable development goals,
BP	British Petroleum,
AU	African Union,
AFREC	African Energy Commission.
EPC	Engineering, procurement, and construction
CMEC	China Machinery Engineering Corporation
CWEIL	Craftskills Wind Energy International
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
Du ISERC	Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management with a case study of Kipeto Energy, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management, identify other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy and to assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy. The study used Situational Crisis Communication Theory was developed by Coombs and his associates in 1995. The premise of the theory is that crisis always has a psychological attitude, and this attitude affects how the affected parties will interact with the organization. Questionnaires were primarily used to collect data. opinion leaders had played a critical role in bridging the gap between the community and the organization during crisis and that at no single instance has the organization employed the services of incompetent opinion leaders that ever led to a prolonged crisis. The findings show good strategies used by Kipeto Energy in obtaining and using opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to individuals. The study also found that that Kipeto Energy continuously looks for trustworthy and credible opinion leaders as well as training newly employed opinion leaders on the mission and vision of the organization whereby 50% agreed with this as individual, these findings agreed with a study by The study recommends that the participants in the study to investigate how opinion leaders wield influence during a crisis, exploring their roles in shaping public opinion. The study recommends further research on exploration of how AI can assist opinion leaders in crisis communication, including sentiment analysis, content recommendation and real time monitoring of employee sentiments.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Energy crises are being fueled by rising fossil fuel costs due to increased cost of mining and high demands resulting from economic and population growth. An alternative and reliable non-fossil fuel is being proposed as the future source of energy that would assist in mitigating these crises (Hartley et al., 2016). Opinion leaders are anticipated to play a critical role in transitioning nations into the era of relying more on renewable energy. Western and African leaders are working in new partnerships to address renewable energy from sources such as wind, solar, hydroelectric, and natural gas. There is a global energy crisis and leaders, opinion leaders, will play a critical role in guiding masses into responding to the energy and climate crisis by adopting renewable energy solutions (International Monetary Fund, 2022).

Considering the evident crisis brought about the international push for renewable energy, institutions need to have a well-defined response strategy in place for the various types of crises that may occur. In times of crisis, a well thought out plan can result in a business succeeding or experiencing failure (Alas et al., 2010). Crises do occur, and it is not a matter of "if" an organization will undergo some crisis; rather, the more appropriate question is "where" and "when." Whether the cause of the crisis is an earthquake, a natural disaster, or a strike, the organization will take on the weight of the crisis (Belal & Momin, 2009).

Organizations need to have internal and external mechanisms aimed at addressing and seeking to diffuse crises as they occur.

A crisis is an occurrence that has a high impact and a low probability of occurring within an organization but has the potential to threaten the entire operation (Auer & Rotfeld, 2014). Crisis jeopardizes public perceptions of values, security, and correctness the organizations claim to uphold. When information is disseminated by individuals and organizations in the marketplace, it is evident that some individuals exhibit higher influence compared.

Theoretically, an opinion leader is considered to be a reliable source of information by those around them, and they generally have their unique way of conveying a message (Bosse et al., 2009). Pressure from the social arena may lead to various opinions forming and those considered to be opinion leaders can provide an additional layer of trust to an organization's corporate communication infrastructure. They accomplish this by vigorously fact-checking and engaging in activities that assist them avoid repeating the same message, whether verified or not (Falkheimer, 2008).

People of influence run the risk of unwittingly amplifying the negative flow of information through an organization's corporate communication infrastructure if they do not engage in these activities themselves (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). Generally social media platforms are distrusted due to the rampant and unverifiable information floating in those platforms. Opinion leaders who have built trust among their audience give messages that can guide their followers to the right information (Park, Fisher, Flew, & Dulleck, 2020). These social media platforms and search engines are notorious for eroding trust, spreading disinformation, and creating a repetitive cycle of the same communication, whether it is accurate or not (Heath & O'Hair, 2010).

The social media digital platforms have increased skepticism and suspicion of the news shared and mistrust has been developed as some of the information shared has been found to be disinformation, fabrication, exaggeration and at times the information is purposefully presented to manipulate the masses (Park et al., 2020).

When an organization is facing a crisis, the stakeholders and managers may consider the event as unexpected, though it carries the potential to disrupt the organization's goal and alter the relationship between the stakeholders. Though this is a genuine concern for any organization, there are conflicting prescriptions given to the processes and expected results regarding crisis management (Bundy et al., 2017).

Crisis communication changes from one situation to another based on the stance taken by the organization. There are various strategies the organization may employ during crisis communication. These strategies range from accommodative strategies to defensive strategies. Accommodative strategies include taking corrective action, apologizing and ingratiation while defensive strategies include attacking the accuser, making excuses and denying the crisis exist (Wilcox et al., 2015).

Background to the Study

Opinion Leader

Opinion leadership is said to have developed from a two-step flow of communication where the originator of the information looks for influential individuals in the society who then pass on the information to those they influence in their day-to-day interactions. Opinion leaders are found at every level of society, and they have something in common with the people they influence within their sphere. These leaders are more exposed and knowledgeable than the people they influence.

Opinion leadership is therefore the process of an opinion leader informally influencing the decision-making processes of other towards changing their attitudes and actions regarding a particular aspect (Katz, 1957).

Individuals or organizations regarded as opinion leaders have a well-established reputation for expressing well-informed opinions in their respective fields (Auer & Rotfeld, 2014). An organization can impact the customers' perceptions of the brand through opinion leaders, thought leaders, or influencers formerly known as business insiders or decision-makers. These leaders shape public policy and the influence they have on markets and industries, or business sector, is undeniable (Belal & Momin, 2009).

It is important to identify opinion leaders accurately due to the sudden changes some of them have in a position had expressed earlier. Opinion leaders hold a critical position of being able to shape and change business trends, head a political stream, and even raise social awareness on various societal issues. Interactions between individuals result in their opinions being affected and this is the area opinion leaders thrive as they influence others towards a particular end (Bamakam et al., 2019).

There is a variety of opinion leaders and each one brings something special to the table in terms of promoting a particular product, service, or idea. The influence of these public figures can be embedded in various ways, including the incorporation of product or service placement into their daily routines (Bosse et al., 2009). Opinion leaders influence their audience on a wide range of topics which include current industry and consumer trends. Experts in particular fields view the role of influencing others as a source of income and are thus opinion leaders in that sense (Bernstein, 2007).

Opinion leaders are normally experts in their field and are connected to those whom they influence (Jungnickel, 2018). The extent to which an individual may see themselves as opinion leaders may not reflect and may in fact be inflated and this is a falsely perceived level of influence. For example, nano influencers may perceive themselves as opinion leaders and score themselves highly on the opinion leadership scale and yet have a lower influence on the score they gave themselves. This may be the case even when they are experts in their field (Akdevelioglu & Kara, 2020). This was aligned to the opinion of another scholar who stated an expert may not necessarily enjoy opinion leadership (Jungnickel, 2018).

Further, influential people might simply encourage their followers to think about a particular concept, product, or business and thereby play the role of an opinion leader (Brunner, 2019). Other opinion leaders are simply members of a particular community, be it a physical location, a particular industry, or an online organization (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Every sector and society have a high-ranking person or persons whose opinion is strong, and it can be attributed to having achieved noteworthy awards, financial status, or prestige (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). It's not uncommon for a person's influence to be gained through years of experience in their field or a large network of trustworthy personal connections (Crandall, Parnell, & Spillan, 2013).

Businesses strategically take advantage of opinion leaders by seeking partnerships with prominent individuals during their product campaign endorsement. Opinion leaders tend to validate ideas or products, which in turn is anticipated to boost organizational performance (Drupsteen & Hasle, 2014). Both the business and the influencer's audience gain from this form of collaboration, which increases brand exposure and trust.

Opinion leaders employ social pressure to influence the opinions of their followers by distributing messages through appropriate media channels (Falkheimer, 2008). Opinion leaders play a key role in organizations since they communicate organizational knowledge to members who are unlikely to seek the information on their own (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). Information is not just disseminated; it is filtered, selected, organized, and presented using professionals or experts' knowledge. Opinion leaders depend on their personal relationships with the people they are communicating with as they pass on the desired message. They must demonstrate loyalty to their followers and stand up for certain values if they are to remain relevant (Heath, Lee, & Ni, 2009). It is strongly believed opinion leaders are gatekeepers to what the social circle should deem as interesting and valuable. Even when information is available to all, the gatekeepers shift perception towards what should be considered as important (Jin, 2009).

Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is a form of communication that is concerned with the reputation of individuals and organizations (Coombs, 2007). The main purpose of this type of communication is to protect the public image and reputation of the organization (Coldwell, 2018). Crisis communication professionals encounter a variety of challenges that endanger an organization's brand and reputation (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Crisis creates an insatiable desire for information, which appropriate communication can work towards satisfying. As part of proper analysis and management practice, the management should be keen to investigate the crisis management strategy prior, during and after crisis (Bosse et al., 2009).

Crisis communication ought to be designed to reach the audience affected by the crisis, both internal and external. The key spokesman should ensure information is disseminated consistently throughout the period of crisis (Crandall, Parnell, & Spillan, 2013). Crisis knowledge management and stakeholder reaction management are components of crisis management that need are designed to not only resolve the crisis and the information about it, but also manage the response of stakeholders so that their confidence in the organization is not fully eroded. Crisis knowledge management denotes the manner of gathering, analyzing, disseminating, and making decisions during a crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Additionally, stakeholder reaction management encompasses the various communication activities made to impact the stakeholder groups in a desired manner regarding the crisis. They are meant to restore credibility to the organization and keep the stakeholders informed of the measures being undertaken towards resolving the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Some of the measures undertaken include using the right words and action to portray an understanding of the crisis and how it is impacting the organization. Further, a clear response to the crisis is crucial towards creating an effective piece of crisis communication (Heath et al., 2009).

There has always been an effort to resolve crises despite the increased interest in studies devoted to crisis management (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). In the past, crises were handled as they arose in different ways by different civilizations, but today, the efforts are more deliberate (Falkheimer, 2008). Media sources and social media platforms distribute a short piece of news, which reaches a big audience, resulting in fear and uneasiness among

the problem's intended audience (Jin, 2009). In such a scenario, steps can be taken to minimize the negative towards the company and the stakeholders (Bernstein, 2007).

The main purpose of crisis management is to intentionally minimize the negative effects of the crisis (Sandin, 2008).

Crisis Communication Management

Crisis communication management entails having a strategy in place for effective communication with internal and external stakeholders during a crisis. It involves having in place early detection mechanisms for potential crisis, identifying the nature of the crisis, having a timeframe for resolving the crisis and facilitating the aversion of the crisis. Though it is not possible for an organization to fully avert a crisis, it is possible to handle it with minimal loss. According to Vasickova (2019), a crisis management strategy is meant to track the various stages of a crisis which include the identification stage, resuscitation stage, diagnosis stage, consolidation and stabilization stage and the corrective measure to be taken to arrive at the solution stage (Vichova & Hromada, 2018).

According to Chandler (2005), there are six stages of crisis, and they are warning, assessment of risk, response, management, resolution, and recovery. It's therefore evident that crisis management does not have a standard classification of its various stages but there are clear indicators (Chandler, 2005).

Crisis management is a response to changes in the external environment of the organization and it provides a structure to quickly and correctly respond to crisis and minimize unintended consequences. Crisis communication is crucial during crisis management, and it enables the organization to keep in touch with its publics and also filter the information. Activities included in crisis management include financial activities,

social media marketing or public relations, and the focus of these activities is to rescue the reputation of the organization.

Every voice of a member of the crisis management team needs to be heard because managers may not always think clearly during crisis (Venus et al., 2020). As soon as the focal points have been identified, the crisis management team needs to start implementing the plan at an internal and external level. The leader has the critical role of ensuring everyone responsible takes up the activities assigned to them according to the crisis management plan (Dimitrovska et al., 2023).

When crisis occurs in an unseen context, there could arise a problem in understanding the message. If the crisis has been well defined, communication about it will not be satisfactory and this could result in the worsening of the situation. It may be difficult to identify the nature of the crisis because it may be because of information technology, strategic planning, knowledge management, governance, leadership, role of professionals or communication. Organizations need to ensure they are training, planning, and communicating the importance of crisis management if they are to survive and grow as they remove risks and uncertainty and create an environment for the organization to achieve its goals (Hazaa et al., 2021).

Global Perspective

Crises emerge across all industries. Energy companies globally have had a crisis based on the hazardous nature of the material they are engaged in and how it is handled. The petroleum industry has caused one of the world largest maritime disasters. British Petroleum, BP, had an incident in the 2010 whereby one of its oil wells spilled large amounts of crude oil, seven hundred and eighty million gallons into the sea (Wolf & Mejri, 2013).

The reputation of the company fell. This was reflected in its shares falling significantly when it was given the lowest rank of grade E by ethical investors. BP managers were reluctant to give information on safety procedures in the past. This negative historical evidence further darkened the reputation of the organization. Another aspect adding to the disrepute was the company did not have a clear spokesperson that was identified and prepared. BP's crisis communication was neither quick nor accurate. Lastly, the former BP CEO was ill prepared, and his negative attitude further led to the loss of reputation of the company (Wolf & Mejeri, 2013).

Companies have incorporated social media in their communication strategies. The use of opinion leaders is a global phenomenon with social media being the most active. A single platform like twitter has 340 million active users, with key figures including presidents using it to disseminate information. Opinion leadership is built on propagation of information through masses where few highly influential individuals influence the masses. Twitter was used in Germany to advocate for renewable energy and progress was tracked through the most influential individuals and the number of likes and re-tweets of followers account (Walter & Hanke, 2020).

When the government cannot be reached effectively, the citizens turn to social media platforms such as Twitter to criticize actions taken by government to handle crisis. The government of Indonesia was considered slow in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The communication from the government was not clear and it was not informed by the government policies were not informed by the public opinion (Prastyo et al., 2020).

Further, in the sector of renewable energy, the Indonesian government is facing crisis in financing the projects and has put in place tariffs to stifle renewable energy efforts

which is contrary to proponents of the energy. Additionally, there is no clear communication of who will address the shortfall. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources has failed to get partners to fund renewable operations which has deepened the energy crisis in the nation. The local governments on the other hand do not have sufficient capacity to utilize the renewable energy resource and this evidence of lacking a proper management strategy resulting in prolonged crisis (Udin, 2020).

In Africa, crisis communication has resulted in worsening situations that were already in dire need of a solution. During the Covid-19 the then President of Tanzania John Magufuli chose not to follow the World Health Organization protocol for handling the pandemic crisis. Even though the late president had a doctorate in biology, he went against the norm and communicated a contrary message to the mainstream message being proclaimed by other biological and scientific bodies. When other nations were locking down their citizens due to the pandemic crisis, the president responded to the crisis by allowing the citizenry to continue with their everyday activities. His communication management during the crisis was considered as a catalyst for deepening the crisis and promoting religious sentimentalism at the perceived cost of the nation (Greco, 2020). Renewable energy is among the millennial development goals, MDGs adopted by African nations (Sabban, 2020).

Kenya has several renewable energy projects, some of which were implemented while others were not. Kinangop`60.8 megawatts in Nyandarua County failed to be implemented due to issues relating to compensation of land. \$144 million had been set aside in joint venture between the Kenyan government, Old Mutual Investment Group and Macquarie Group. There was a gap in communication between the farmers and the project

shareholders. There is no evidence opinion leaders from the community were engaged in the process. The failure set back efforts of Kenya to increase clean energy by 5, 000MW (Reuters Staff, 2016).

When government officials are the cause of the problem and refuse to make changes, projects stall and some never get implemented. Leaders in managerial positions with askew standards frequently strive to obscure their activities, complicate, and lengthen replies, while making the experience of employees increasingly negative and in so doing, blatantly threaten the organizations security and reputation (Cingöz & Akdoan, 2013). Some leaders disregard the organization's policy to meet financial targets. They lower the quality standards, overlook ethical rules and work around procedures to meet deadlines. Leaders who find themselves in an undesirable situation due to their actions attempt to divert blame or hire communication experts to reframe the image of the organization through right messaging (Farndale et al., 2019).

Not all opinion leaders work in the interest of the people they influence because the motivation can be skewed (Park et al., 2020). The Turkana Wind Project, Africa's biggest wind farm, in Marsabit County, delayed for five years due to conflict between community and the government over the land. 150, 000 acres had been irregularly allocated for the project without involving the community and this led the community to sue the government. Other challenges were socio-economic where the communities would lose access to their homes and pastureland when not vetted.

Dialogue between the community and Lake Turkana Wind Power Limited facilitated by an independent arbiter was needed (Gumba & Turi, 2020). Government officials are opinion leaders by virtue of the position they hold. They use their influence to

circumvent legal procedures and acquire land for investors. This results in a crisis as the concerned community is not involved in the process. When the Lake Turkana Wind Project was being set up, an error was made of not considering the cultural context and this resulted in a protracted court case. Government official with inside information about proposed projects collude to buy land where the project is anticipated to be and later sell it at a higher price (Watima, 2021). This reiterates the argument that opinion leaders need to be rightly identified and that they ought to uphold the norms and ethical standards upheld by the community (Bamakam et al., 2019).

Profile of Kipeto Energy

To meet the country's demand for clean renewable energy, Kipeto Energy PLC (KEP) started the Kipeto Wind Energy Project which produces 100 megawatts (MW). The Kipeto Power Station is located in the foothills of Ngong Hills, in Kajiado County, approximately 80 kilometers (50 mi), by road, south of Nairobi, the capital and largest city in the country. The project official signed an agreement with Kenya Power and Lighting Company in 2016 and got the needed government letter of support from the government, required permits and approval from the environmental authorities.

The Kajiado County substation in Isinya, is served by 60 wind turbines and a 17-kilometer, 220kV transmission line as part of the project. The Project commenced operations in 2023 and has received \$320 million in financing (Kipeto Energy, 2023). It has a 20-year power purchase agreement with Kenya Power and Lighting Company which was signed in July 2016. General Electric supplied the turbines and managed the project's operations and maintenance.

Engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) services were provided by China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) and the agreements were signed in

March 2018 and in the third quarter of the same year, the project begun. Various investors are on board namely Investors Actis (88%), Craftskills Wind Energy International (CWEIL) (12%), and the US government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Each of the investors pledged USD 233 million in senior debt for funding the development (Kipeto Energy, 2022).

Even when it was clear the community could benefit from the project, a crisis emerged that would have stalled the project. Having a clear strategy is not enough to ensure a project succeeds, clear communication during crisis management is a need and this needs to be done through acknowledged channels with influence. The Maasai are an indigenous population that is semi-nomadic and relies mostly on cattle husbandry for their way of life. They dwell in the region of the Kipeto Wind Power Project. Investors are obligated by law and both national and international human rights norms to provide stakeholder engagement and benefits to the communities in the project area while building such projects.

This illustrates the importance of complaint mechanisms and community engagement for new large-scale constructions to increase energy generation, noting that communities in Kenya and other parts of the world have expressed serious concerns about the adverse impacts of such projects on their land rights, livelihoods, and traditions.

Kipeto Energy has had to rely on consultants during crisis communication and the consultants were considered to be experts, opinion leaders, in resolving crisis through targeted messaging. However, this did not work out for the energy company as the crisis kept on rising, especially within the environment.

The company resulted in forming a crisis committee which was comprised of leaders from the community who had influence over a particular public. This has equipped

the organization with an array of opinion leaders who can be called upon during crisis to address their unique public and hence resolve the crisis at the grass root level. The committee comprises of youth, men, women, church elders, pastor, and a chief, each with a distinct responsibility during a crisis. They have used both traditional means or resolving crisis through the elders and pastors and modern methods such as blogs to highlight emerging challenges encountered by the organization.

Kipeto Energy Crisis Management

Kipeto Energy, a renewable energy company operating in Kenya, faces various potential crises in the field of wind energy generation. Effective crisis management is essential to ensure the continuous and reliable supply of clean energy. Here, we will explore why crisis management is crucial for Kipeto Energy, provide examples of potential crises, and discuss a successful crisis management case. Crisis management is critical for Kipeto Energy due to the nature of the energy sector and the company's commitment to sustainability. The interruption of energy production can have far-reaching consequences, impacting not only the company's operations but also the reliability of electricity supply to the grid and, by extension, the communities it serves. A failure in crisis management could lead to power outages and economic losses. Additionally, Kipeto Energy's commitment to environmental and social responsibility means that any environmental incidents, such as equipment failure or harm to local ecosystems, must be handled with the utmost care.

One example of a potential crisis was the failure of a critical wind turbine component. For instance, there was a malfunction in a key component which was the gearbox and rotor blade in one of their key turbines which lead to a significant drop in energy production. It was addressed promptly and effectively which resulted in minimal

financial losses, minimal missed energy generation targets, and minimal disruptions in the electricity supply. The successful crisis management case for Kipeto Energy involved a swift and effective response to a turbine malfunction. In this scenario, the company's crisis management team quickly identified the issue, initiated repairs, and ensured minimal downtime. By having contingency plans and the necessary spare parts readily available, Kipeto Energy was able to restore operations without significant disruptions. Additionally, the company maintained open and transparent communication with relevant stakeholders, such as energy distributors and local authorities, to minimize the impact on electricity supply.

In conclusion, crisis management is essential for Kipeto Energy due to the potential risks and challenges in the renewable energy sector. Through proactive planning and effective crisis response, the company was able to mitigate financial losses, ensure the reliability of energy supply, and uphold its commitment to environmental and social responsibility. Success in crisis management at Kipeto Energy was characterized by swift and well-coordinated actions, ensuring minimal disruptions and maintaining the company's reputation as a reliable and sustainable energy provider.

Statement of the Problem

Firms are aware of the negative impact terrible and ineffective leaders have on the organizations image, but few know how to address the problem (Wolf & Mejri, 2013). Organizations have various strategies to achieving the organizational objectives; yet interventions initiated by organizations are not successful considering. About sixty to ninety percent of all strategies fail at implementation (Candido & Santos, 2019).

This implies having a crisis communication management strategy in place does not mean it will be successful. A company's use of opinion leaders in crisis communications is an attempt to persuade consumers that the issue is less serious than it appears, and thereby avoid negative opinions being formed against the company's brand (Falkheimer, 2008; Drupsteen & Hasle, 2014). A study on leadership in crisis concluded that leadership is crucial in crisis management because they motivate their teams to act according to the crisis management plan until the matter is sufficiently resolved (Dimitrovska, Stamenkova, & Stosic, 2023).

Another studied identified having competent leaders in each phase of a crisis will go towards building organizational capacities through proper crisis management activities (Hazaa et al., 2021).

Kipeteo Energy was singled out of the study because it has experienced a lot of challenges from its inception stage. It has also used consultant companies as opinion leaders who would help the organization to address its crisis communication management strategy. Finally, they formed an internal crisis committee and there still seems to be a crisis emerging as the organization continues to seek to achieve its goals. This study addresses the impact opinion leaders have in assisting the organization to manage its crisis communication aspects.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management with a case study of Kipeto energy, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were:

- 1 To identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management.
- 2 To identify other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy.
- 3 To assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided the study include:

1. What is the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management?
2. What are the other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy?
3. What is the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management at Kipeto Energy?

The research questions are helpful in guiding the study towards ensuring the key aspects of the study are addressed and that the study remains focused on the objectives it set out to assess. Research questions also serve as an effective evaluation tool that is used to assess whether the research objectives adequately cover and reflect the intended purpose of the study (Houston & McDonagh, 2023).

Justification for the Study

Public relations practitioners commonly employ the strategy of taking the lead in shaping public opinion. Effective opinion leaders can contribute to business executives rising to the top of their field (Vogelaar, 2007). Business and non-profit leaders, as well as

experts in crisis communication management inside their companies may be well-versed with the subject of crisis communication management; however, they may not have the time or capacity to put their knowledge into practice (Heide & Simonsson, 2019). As a result, such individuals shy away from public and televised interviews to avoid making mistakes or being unable to answer difficult questions. This avoidance reduces the credibility of the individual and the organization at large (Coldwell, 2018).

Public relations and communications professionals frequently take on the responsibility of uncovering the executive's specific expertise and tailoring them to suit the speeches and communication given during a crisis management (Kayes et al., 2012; Kapucu & Ustun, 2017; Winston, 2019). The leaders' set of beliefs or behavior can be a powerful tool in influencing and advocating for change or acceptance (Topper & Lagadec, 2013). There is no current study that the researcher is aware of that addresses opinion leadership's role in managing crisis communication at Kipeto energy. The power sector in Kenya has had backlash from the community due misuse of office, irregular implementation of projects, lack of accurate and timely communication and little cooperation with communities where projects are being implemented. This had resulted in a crisis emerging and some projects being abandoned all together. The wasted resources and opportunities lost due to failure of resolving the crisis cannot be underestimated.

Significance of the Study

This research helps to better understand the crisis communication management process and the role opinion leaders have in contributing towards the management of crisis at Kipeto energy. The study also sheds light on times when crisis communication through opinion leaders was required. The study gave the management at Kipeto Energy, other

renewable centers and the power energy, insight into crisis communication strategies which equipped them to better handle crisis in future. Further, the study shed light on crisis communication management gaps within the industry and provide possible solutions to addressing them in future. Lastly, the study contributes to the academic and research communities because of the new knowledge that will lay the groundwork for developing new research avenues, expanding the body of literature, and expanding on scholarly concepts that will aid in elaborating the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management.

Assumptions of the Study

Respondents will be willing to cooperate as they will want to find out the results of the study. There are types of crises encountered by Kipeto Energy in addition to having a level of awareness of crisis communication management at Kipeto Energy. There is a level of influence of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy; and there are challenges that hinder the management in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy.

Scope of the Study

Kipeto Energy was the focus of the study because since its inception it has employed various strategies towards managing the many crises it has endured. The study focused on the opinion leaders tasked with crisis management communication at various levels. Kipeto Energy has offices in Nairobi central business district, Westland's and at Isinya, Kajiado County. Kipeto energy has a structure for managing crisis. The community initiative team is the first to highlight a possible crisis. Then the matter is moved to the social management team which is headed by the senior manager who coordinates the two

teams. If the matter cannot be resolved at the team's level, it is shifted to the top management of the organization, and these will form the scope of the study.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The respondents may not give accurate information for personal reasons or for fear of reprimand by the management. The researcher informed the respondents that all the information shared will be treated with confidentiality and for used for academic purposes only.

The researcher collected the data and visiting all the sites was challenging. The researcher however created a schedule and communicated with the respective offices prior to the date for visiting and the kind of respondents needed for the research.

Definition of Terms

Crisis communication: refers to a specialized division that is responsible for the reputation of both people and organizations. A crisis communication initiative is one that tries to safeguard an organization's reputation and maintain its public image (Alas et al., 2010). In this study, crisis communication entails communication given by opinion leaders towards retaining the standing of the organization during a crisis.

Crisis management: Crisis management is a proactive process that entails addressing a crisis before, during, and after it occurs (Coldwell, 2018). In this study, crisis management referred to the strategies employed by the organization towards mitigating the negative effects during a crisis.

Opinion leaders: Opinion leaders are defined as individuals or organizations who are industry specialists or otherwise have widely known and trusted viewpoints (Wang & Li, 2016). Opinion leaders, also known as thought leaders or influencers, can

sway public opinion, including your customers' attitudes (Drupsteen & Hasle, 2014). In this study, opinion leaders are those stakeholders who are tasked to give viewpoints and direct the communicated messages towards swaying the public's opinion during a crisis.

Leadership: The effect of leaders and followers on an organization's attainment of its objectives (Belal & Momin, 2009). In this study, leadership focused on those individuals who give guidance to followers towards achieving the objective of resolving the crisis.

Organization: A collection of people who are sufficiently coordinated and productive to meet a demand or accomplish a common aim. Every organization has a management structure that connects and divides; and gives roles, responsibilities, and power to delegate specific tasks to various activities and people (Haciolu, Dinçer, & Alayolu, 2016). In this study, the focus on organization was on the structure that is coordinated to produce a common aim of resolving the conflict.

Organizational structure: A structure that illustrates how an organization's actions are directed toward accomplishing its objectives. These may take the form of legislation, positions, or obligations. Additionally, it establishes the way information flows throughout the company's processes (Vogelaar, 2007). In this study, organization structure considered those channels, positions, and obligations that are employed during crisis communication management.

Summary

This chapter highlighted opinion leaders and the role they play in crisis communication management. Opinion leaders were identified as those individuals with a

sway over the public and how this sway can be employed in executing a crisis communication management plan. The objectives were identified, and Kipeto Energy was chosen as the case study due to the numerous crises it has endured since its inception and the various strategies it has employed to mitigate crisis. Kipeto Energy had several way to eradicate crisis, for example, Kipeto Energy defined controls to ensure a response does not compromise product safety. Setting measures to identify and isolate product affected by the crisis. In addition, to identify ability of resources and provisions for back-up sources for critical systems. While crisis communication can be reactive, it helps to have a crisis communication plan in place before you need to use it to make the process easier for your team members. In this chapter, we also talk of how crisis communication plan guarantee a quicker release of information, as well as a consistent message on all company platform during a time of crisis. Additionally that message depends largely on what the crisis involves and how all parties are affected by it. Crisis communication plan is essential to focus on crises that may affect normal companies and administrative functions. For example Kipeto Energy used opinion leaders on issues like land crisis where the Maasai did not want to give out their land because they thought they were selling their land. However, because of the use of opinion leaders dissemination the right information to the Maasai community and because of their influence the Maasai agreed to lease their land to, Kipeto Energy for twenty years.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter has examined the theoretical framework, general and empirical literature and capture scholarly work on opinion leaders and crisis communication management. A conceptual framework was developed and discussed.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is composed of concepts developed and linked based on established an established theory or theories. It is then mindfully applied to the area under study with references made to relevant scholarly literature (Suen & Ary, 2014). The theoretical framework does demonstrate a comprehension of relevant ideas and concepts relating to the research study and to the broader fields of knowledge under consideration (Swanson, 2014).

Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory, SCCT, is a relevant theory that was developed by Coombs and his associates in 1995. The premise of the theory is that crisis always has a psychological attitude, and this attitude affects how the affected parties will interact with the organization. SCCT helps to capture the perception of the people in the crisis, their response to the interventions in the crisis management. Through the theory, the different behavioural traits of the people during the crisis are captured. SCCT as theory effectively assists in identifying the aspects that form the crisis and the threat that may result from the crisis situation. The reputation of an organization is understandably under

threatened when an organizations current crisis stem from interventions made in a previous crisis (Kyrychok, 2017).

Even when the crisis resulted from victimization of the organization or an uncontrollable event, the perception of the reputation of the organization remains at threat of destruction. SCCT contends that crisis managers need to know whether the people know about past crisis regarding the organization which is important in shaping the attitude people will have on current crisis. Crisis communication coming from the organization must be considerate of past crisis and therefore adjust its communication strategy accordingly when addressing the relevant publics (Coombs, 2004).

This theory was suitable for this study because it provided critical components relating to crisis communication. It adequately provides a framework for analysing the cause of the crisis; threats that may result from the crisis; the attitudes of those involved in the crisis and this includes stakeholders in the internal and external environments.

Situational crisis communication theory also provides an avenue for analysing past crisis interventions undertaken and contends that crisis managers have a critical role to play during a crisis. Kipeto Energy has experienced crisis in the past and the elements identified in the theory will help in locating the same at the organization and provide an adequate framework for analysing the crisis communication management strategies employed.

Social crisis communication theory has been used to analyse the successful crisis communication management campaign by organization including a company named Fonterra Sri Lanka. The theory clearly states managers need to match their crisis communication efforts to the level of responsibility demanded for by the crisis and the threat of reputation posed by the crisis.

The theory provides three strategies an organization may adapt towards mitigating the crisis. There are primary crisis responses strategies which may be considered as a basic level of thinking because of their unsophisticated nature. They include attacking the accuser, denying the crises exist or using a scape goat. Other forms of responses include giving an excuse that the organization could not control the crisis; justifying the crisis by minimizing the perceived impact; compensating those affected by the crisis; and lastly indicating the organization has taken full responsibility for the crisis and asking stakeholders for forgiveness (Gamage, 2016).

Secondary crisis response strategies include making crisis response strategies stronger; reminding stakeholders of past successful interventions; ingratiating the stakeholders by praising them for past good works; and victim age, which questionably seeks to portray the organization as a victim the crisis. Fonterra Sri Lanka employed immediate, short-term, and long-term crises responses in its crisis management strategy. It effectively pulled all its stock from the market immediately after learning of contamination concerns. Fonterra then endeavoured to continually held press conferences to express their view, published reports on medical reports and distributed leaflets in the short term. For the long-term response, it re-launched the affected product and carried out a wide scale awareness campaign of the safety of their products which had a special sticker of safety (Gamage, 2016).

Understandably, when crisis occur, they are unexpected, potentially disruptive and give a general sense of not being in control due to the high scrutiny and possible spread of a negative image regarding the organization (Cooley & Cooley, 2011).

The SCCT gives a simplistic systematic order of how crisis may occur and proceeds to propose a step by step means of handling the crisis. It is clear crisis do not occur and neither can they be resolved in a systematic manner because of the many variables engaged during a crisis. Therefore, the theory seems to be too straightforward and simplistic in resolving the complex nature crisis management.

General Literature Review

Opinion Leadership

An opinion leader has peculiar traits and a certain level of expertise, authority, and has developed trust from the audience they influence. The unique essence of an opinion leader is the influence they have within their environment which may consist of colleagues, customers, or followers (Aleahmad.et., al, 2015). Opinion leaders play a critical role in the assembly and synthesizing of information for the public (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). Opinion leaders educate consumers about new items and offer advice on how best to use them. They indeed assist customers in making purchasing decisions as they share their own personal experiences with their target demographics (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Opinion leaders have purposefully equipped themselves with relevant information and skills can influence their audience on several topics, from industry trends to current events and consumer behavior and they often monetize their services (Dalrymple, Shaw, & Brossard, 2013). Opinion leaders are also people who are already a prominent part of a certain community, be it a physical area, a particular sector, or an online organization. In the past, business insiders were considered opinion leaders and are well-known in a certain industry, market, or field of endeavor (Cho et al., 2012). In recent times, technology has made it possible for opinion leaders emerge from anywhere (Bergström & Jervelycke, 2018).

It is an indisputable reality that there are different types of opinion leaders and each one brings something special to the table in terms of promoting the organization's service, reputation, or product (Gnambs & Batinic, 2012). Opinion leaders go by other terms such as thought leaders and influencers (Eck, Jager, & LeeFlang, 2011). It is not uncommon for a person to gain influence over years of professional expertise or an extensive network of trusted personal contacts (McCrimmon, 2005). Even though many companies seek out industry experts and social media influencers with large followings, not every firm is a good match for these opinion leaders and understandably some influencers are reluctant to engage with organization they do not share same virtues or norms (Meng et al., 2011).

Essence of Opinion Leaders

An opinion leader has to be persuasive and employ traits such as charisma and knowledge to effectively communicate their message in a friendly, credible and compelling manner (Kim, 2015). Influential figures serve as role models and have a reputation within the community (Masuda, 2015; McCrimmon, 2005). Opinion leaders are rightly and strongly concerned about matters affecting their environment (Meng et al., 2011). It is as if they are compelled to commit their time and energy to address these issues. In their committed pursuit, they shape perceptions and responses of people within their sphere (Merwe & Heerden, 2009).

Embedded in their influence are the expertise and knowledge opinion leaders possess. Opinion leaders are well-versed in the products or services they advocate for and are programmed to communicate this effectively. To obtain the title of expert in a particular field, individuals sacrificially invest time and effort in educating themselves about the product or service they wish to impact (Weeks et al., 2015). Opinion leaders have the

uncanny ability to take complex issues and clarify them and communicate them clearly to their audience (Weimann et al., 2007).

Opinion leaders are public relations professionals who possess a natural ability to persuade their audience through language and therefore persuasion plays a big role in shaping an effective opinion leader (Weimann et al., 2007). Opinion leaders recognize social media engagement is the most effective method of identifying and connecting with their audience and hence seek to utilize it in a more effective manner than others. This implies opinion leaders keep updating their skills and talents to remain relevant (Xu et al., 2014).

According to Adams (2003), opinion leaders share certain value orientations. They tend to be less materialistic and hedonistic than the average person, as well as less focused on material gain and financial success. Additionally, opinion leaders exhibit a heightened sense of social responsibility, political tolerance, civic engagement, and environmental stewardship, all of which relate to post-materialist (Adams, 2003).

As discussed in various terms, opinion leaders have expertise in a particular area. According to Gnamb and Batinis (2012), opinion leaders tend to fall in one these two types, monomorphic and polymorphic leadership type. Monomorphic refers to an opinion leader who is a leader in a particular field and tends to be a follower in another (Dalrymple et al., 2013). They are normally specialists in a particular field as their unique knowledge gives them insight that is not available to others (Masuda, 2015). By contrast, polymorphic opinion leaders influence others on a wide range of issues. They are market mavericks and portray personality dominance, and generalists (Trepte & Scherer, 2010).

Opinion leaders can choose from various technologically powered means of communication channels to reach their audience. Social media plays a critical role in this technological age and bloggers are typically recognized as authorities in their respective fields as they use internet-based platforms to share the message (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). They are the perfect choice for businesses seeking a more personal connection with their clients. Bloggers present the simplest way of connecting to the target audience through media the target audience is known to be conversant with. Blogs are a perfect platform to showcase the organization's work and educate the audience about the organization's activities (Aleahmad,et.al., 2015).

Impact of Opinion Leadership

Customers have a right to demand to be heard, understood, and engaged more effectively on topics important to them. This has shifted the competitive landscape of organizations to be more customer oriented (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). According to Cheung and Thadani (2012), opinion leadership enables firms to identify and develop strategies to address emerging issues in their environment, especially regarding the customers shifting preferences. The innovative insights generated by opinion leadership upend established wisdom in the industry and society, as well as the way they operate (Cho et al., 2012).

Further, opinion leaders actively contribute to situational improvement by offering innovations that favorably disrupt established processes or question the status quo. They do so whilst seeking to ensure they are meeting the needs of stakeholders, engaging them, and broadly spreading the new point of view throughout the developmental process (Gnambs & Batinic, 2012).

The experts gain users' trust and encourage them to take the suggested action forwarded by the organization as they present the organization's desired perspective (Meng et al., 2011). Opinion leaders powerfully drive new ideas and help in repackaging existing concepts which have resulted in failure which is a form of crisis by the very nature of not achieving the set goal (Trepte & Scherer, 2010). Ideas that go beyond the audience's mental map are unlikely to be accepted. Frequently, it results in miscommunication and mistrust and understandably makes the situation more unfavorable (Rose & Kim, 2011).

Where there is mistrust, there will be insufficient commitment and therefore opinion leaders require time, money, and other resources to manifest the desired goal. And like other individuals, opinion leaders fail to achieve the goal. It follows that organizations that pursue opinion leadership with a lack of dedication are on a futile path (Xu et al., 2014).

Effective opinion leadership requires time to generate results and therefore patience is demanded on the part of firms involved in it. The desire for the organization to succeed in the long-term strategic plan necessitates a committed effort to invest time, money and knowledge (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Further, there need so be a provision for timely and appropriate communication throughout the implementation process (Matous & Wang, 2019). Apart from having the right content, the mode of delivery also needs to be appropriate. Certain businesses struggle with opinion leadership due to the mode and medium of dissemination, even when they have the relevant, innovative, and necessary content. In case of employing the wrong delivery mode, the content will not reach the intended audience, which could most certainly result in failure (Matous & Wang, 2019).

Zhao et al. (2012) posited a correlation between the characteristics of the opinion leader and the influence they wield over the changes of opinion of the in-group members in it. Opinion leaders are important transfer nodes for information dissemination because they not only share knowledge within their own groups, but they also can influence people outside their own groups. This was found in an empirical study conducted in China on green innovation in a developing economy (Liu & Yan, 2018).

Concept of Crisis Management

The environment has significantly changed due to the seemingly unstoppable spread of globalization. There is quick development of information technology systems, a robust communications revolution, new types of strategic alliances, successive intense crises, and other complex phenomena that have compelled institutions to seek new ways to meet these rapid changes (Cascio & Ramiro, 2016).

A crisis is defined as an abrupt change in an institution's internal or external environment that occurs without the institution taking appropriate evasive preparations (Cingöz & Akdoan, 2013). Thus, organizations need to be purposeful and strategic if they are to successfully mitigate most of the negative consequences brought about by crisis and thereby avoid deterioration into oblivion (Gryszkiewicz & Fang, 2012).

This is no one way for managing crisis but crisis management is an intricate collection of aspects an organization considers while addressing disruptive and uncertain events that occur within the scope of its business operations (Vardarlier, 2016).

Through crisis management procedures, organizations are tasked to seek clear and unambiguous means for maintaining operational stability and safeguarding the company and stakeholders' interest (Fisher et al., 2011). Comprehensive plans for addressing crisis are therefore a crucial necessity for organizations to have as part of their preparations in

the event of a crisis occurring as and when it does (Goel, 2009). Crisis management is a significant activity for a business since it highlights possible operational hazards that may occur unexpectedly and helps the organization to focus its resources accordingly. Creation of appropriate actions to mitigate the negative consequences of an uncertain scenario is a generally accepted practice in organizations that successfully mitigate crisis (Gundel, 2005).

According to Bundy et al. (2017), there are some primary characteristics which clearly indicate eminent possibility of crisis occurring. Every crisis demands change of some kind as the disruption and uncertainty they cause is a sign that operations cannot continue as usual. Secondly, crises not only threaten the organization and its stakeholder's interest, but also the stakeholder relationship with the organization as crisis may expose varying interests and demands from those of the organization. Thirdly, crises happen within a context and each context varies whereby different actors behave in particular ways based on their perception of the events rather than the happenings themselves. And lastly, crisis falls within a larger context rather than a discrete event (Bundy et al., 2017).

Organizations with a robust crisis management plan normally have a knowledgeable individual appointed to play the pivotal role of being the spokesperson during crisis. They may function exclusively within or without the organization or both (Lammers, 2011).

One of the proven strategies for crisis management is having regular communication to exemplify its commitment to its stakeholders (Malhotra & Bazerman, 2007). The management of crisis captures the organizations' leadership undertakings and communication towards minimizing the effects of the crisis and reestablishing order after

the crisis (Bundy et al., 2017). Another researcher agreed and stated the crisis management process begins with the development of a plan outlining precise objectives and measures to be undertaken towards resolving a crisis (Kouzmin, 2008).

The days of only involving the higher echelon of the company during crisis are over. The staff should also be aware of relevant crisis issues in advance and the strategies to address such crisis should incorporate their concerns so as to minimize the possibility of rising uncertainty within the ranks of individuals who could contribute to resolving the crisis (Lewicki, et.al, 2015). Rightly, the company should prioritize communication over over-communication to combat rumors. All stakeholders should be actively involved in developing the management approach so as to have a more efficient response during a crisis (Mansor & Ali, 2017).

Crisis Communication Management

Crisis communication management involves having a plan and mechanism in place to clearly facilitate communication with the public and to limit negative effects of the crisis. There are identified channels of communication available for use when a crisis emerges. Some of the channels that can be part of the crisis communication management strategy include mass media, face-to-face, on-line media, non-mass media such as magazines. On-line media constitutes computer-mediated communication, blogs, Facebook and email (Venus et., al 2020).

There are various schools of thought that present principles that are applicable to crisis communication management. According to Kriyantono (2012) there are ten structured principles which are progressively arranged as; engaging the mass media; collecting information; having periodic press conference; revealing information; having a

prudent information dissemination process; communicating reputation; ensuring everyone is on the same page; communicating empathy; and having more than one communication channel. Crisis communication has these principles harmonized in a clear strategy and it may be an erroneous presentation to assume there are clear cut, distinguishable sections during a crisis (Kriyantono, 2012).

The choice of which crisis communication management strategy to be employed depends on several factors, among them, the type of the crisis, the quality of the evidence of the crisis, the harm done by it and past performance of the organization in regard to crisis (Nohammer et al., 2022).

Sources of Crises

As stated convincingly, crises are uncertain events occurring unexpectedly and can emerge from various sources. Crises may occur in any environment the organization interacts with. Natural catastrophes are unpredictable due to their slow evolution, and they strike with little or no notice. In these instances, governments and aid agencies respond reactively rather than pro-actively (Bazerman, 2005). Technology and its rapid change are a constant source of crisis and sure driver of organizational responses, either proactive or reactive. While humans may be powerless to forestall some crises, there is room to plan and mitigate associated harm as was the case of the computer date shift often referred to as Y2K (Cascio & Ramiro, 2016).

There were dreadful predictions as Y2K approached and among them were financial crashes, airplanes falling from the sky, elevators and failure of all equipment using a computer system. The crisis communication was thoroughly done, and the organization took precautions even though it turned out to have an anti-climactic effect contrary to expectations (Goel, 2009).

Interpersonal or inter-organizational relationships are other critical areas that cause crisis as rivalries emerge within and without the organization (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). Organizational dysfunction is at times influenced by perceptions and a lack of clarity rather than verifiable facts themselves. As much as organizations work as one entity, individuality will fragment the group, weakening it and thereby divert resources and energy that is vital for the organization's functions (Hough & Spillan, 2005). Some leaders present themselves as separate entities from the rest of the organization and may intentionally give misleading information as was the case at British Petroleum (Wolf & Meiri, 2013).

A crisis checklist and table tabletop exercise go a long way in addressing crisis. It involves managers coming together and agreeing on appropriate steps to avert the crisis. However, coming to an agreement is not always achieved and crisis managers can disagree, and collaboration may degenerate into outright conflict and animosity in such heated situations (Vardarlier, 2016). Interestingly, when an organization does not have an accurate and early identification mechanism for crisis and associated accelerating factors, it may result in not being able to detect an obvious major source of crisis. Management needs to be courageous, show leadership, pay attention, be knowledgeable and have the capacity to take calculated risks to identify and avert potential crisis situations otherwise crisis will persist (Gryszkiewicz & Fang, 2012).

Effects of Crisis

Organizations may be enticed to reject the notion they are undergoing a crisis, but they need to embrace crisis as they occur. When an organization successfully embraces a crisis, it can create resilience and unearth previously untapped opportunities in the way they communicate with their stakeholders and the wider public (Goel, 2009). According to

several scholars, the impact of crisis include; the administration is pressured to develop new policies to address anticipated problems; the implementation of a collaborative method to crisis management, as opposed to an uncoordinated individual work style is highlighted; and the administration's success in times of crisis stirs up creativity by developing novel ways, procedures, and behaviors to deal with disasters (Hener, 2010; James and James, 2008; Kouzmin,2008). Occasionally, a crisis is required to force decision-makers to abandon outdated methods in favor of new ones that are more responsive to present and future environmental changes (Kouzmin, 2008).

When an organization fails to embrace a crisis or is unwilling to acknowledge it, the organization may face further crisis such as having its image diminish. Secondly, they will lose the chance to communicate with stakeholders and the broader public and hence threaten to lower the confidence of stakeholders towards the organization (Coombs, 2007).

According to Raines (2013) it is clear human, financial, material, or psychological loss occurs during a crisis. Negative situations may encourage detrimental behaviors and ideas and a myriad of unprecedented things may occur including the government rushing to exploit and circumvent the problem through illegal means. Additionally, crisis may lead to the development of a condition of terror, horror, and tension among workers, impairing their ability to make reasonable choices (Cascio & Ramiro, 2016).

Opinion Leadership and Crisis Communication Management

Opinion leaders are leaders with the ability to sway the opinion of the public (Devkota, 2020). At times opinion leaders do achieve the anticipated hype associated with their social status. They are normally respected as they uphold the norms and values of the community they belong to. Their status is however not secured, and they can be a source of crisis when they embrace external progressive norms that are contrary to their publics. Opinion leaders

are also susceptible to influence especially towards conforming to the pressure of the group they belong to (Matous, 2023).

Opinion leaders connect with their public during a crisis and even though they may be in the same trouble, they manage to show the way out of the crisis. The timing of communication needs to be accurate because wrong action at the right time may result in resistance, wrong action at the right time is a mistake, wrong action at the wrong time is a disaster but right action at the right time is a success.

Opinion leaders therefore need to be adaptable to the various challenges brought about by crisis and be able to take control, avoid panic and ensure the individuals tasked with particular roles in the crisis management plan carry them out. A positive team environment is critical during crisis, otherwise the team may feel overwhelmed and unable successfully handle the situation (Dimitrovska, Stamenkova, & Stosic, 2023).

Virtue of their position, CEOs wield skewed influence and are opinion leaders in that sense. Some, however, have poor crisis communication management skills that could easily result in deepening crisis situations when they emerge (Auer & Rotfeld, 2014). During crises, resilience strategies require leadership that is able to employ multiple crisis management strategies.

Organizations stricken crisis can recover from well-designed crisis management strategies, while other organizations may never fully recover due to weak positioning, resource constraints and low understanding of required responses (Akter & Islam, 2023). CEOs have a continual job of managing the reputation of the organization from a broad scope from; managing expectations for profitability to establishing a distinct competitive advantage; to holding employees accountable for their social media posts (Coombs, 2007).

Opinion leaders at times work as the invisible glue that holds the people together during crisis based on the well thought out and inspiring communication they share. They sometimes work behind the scenes towards ensuring the right team is assembled for management. As part of the strategic crisis communication management options, opinion leaders can influence the decision of those appointed for key roles in crisis management (Heide & Simonsson, 2019; Topper & Lagadec, 2013).

The challenge facing corporate boards is identifying capable leaders who can navigate the organization successfully through and attend to slow growth, shifting customer loyalty and product quality. Unfortunately, most of these leaders lack the needed communication skills and this adds to the pressure on public relations offices and consultants to handle crisis that may emerge from the leadership incompetency's (Kapucu & Ustun, 2017).

The threat to company reputation which can be ruined instantly calls for organization to have a counter strategy (Topper & Lagadec, 2013). The top management should therefore be ready to give effective communication of the assessment of the crisis management that may emerge from its operation and should ensure the accurate communication is passed across the entire organization. A point person responsible for this coordination needs to be appointed and be ready to be activated at a moment's notice (Vasickova, 2019).

A proactive posture to be employed by public relations experts and give preemptive action plans to the company executives has now become a norm in many organizations (Crandall et al., 2013). Social media is constantly active to criticize corporation, and this makes the need to prepare and resolve crisis even more pressing (Wang & Li, 2016).

Opinion leadership has therefore emerged from the shadows and has grown to be a necessity in times of crisis, particularly in the aftermath of global disasters, corporate scandals, financial fraud, political corruption, incompetent government service delivery, social issues, terrorism threats and cyber-security dangers (Kuwashima, 2018). Changes in modern days not only require leaders who exhibit competence in communication, but also those who are compassionate and exhibit understanding during crisis. Other desirable traits in leadership are empathy and ability to remain levelheaded in crisis (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

Opinion leaders always have a task at hand during a crisis and task-oriented leadership behaviors are more impactful and beneficial during crisis as opposed to people centered policies due to the tough measures that need to be taken at the time (Dalrymple, Shaw, & Brossard, 2013). Opinion leaders are there to perform the functions other types of leadership are not equipped or are unable to meet (Dalrymple et al., 2013). For example, opinion leaders do the foundational work for consultation which gives the community the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes and thereby contribute to finding solutions during crisis (Masuda, 2015).

As allured to, opinion leaders need to uphold certain virtues and norms. Opinion leaders are the face of the moral standing of the organization they are affiliated with. Recent financial and economic disasters have frequently demonstrated the shortage of ethical and responsible opinion leadership behavior at the highest levels of government (Coleman et al., 2014). Indeed, ethics is a critical component emphasized in crisis management contemporary studies. Ethics is a building block of the mental image and an important aspect in gaining or regaining public confidence (Simola, 2014). It follows that ethical

rationality needs to be perpetually entrenched within the norms and routine operations of opinion leaders who serve as a link between organizations and general interest groups (Lando, 2014).

The high morals and integrity of opinion leaders serves as a genuine platform for launching risk and preventative management strategies which can be employed in crisis management (Richmond et al., 2005). This is considered as an ideal technique for resolving crises as it avoids intra-conflicts that wreak havoc on the environment (Rose & Kim, 2011). When opinion leaders engage in opaque and deceptive tendencies, it erodes public trust towards the company and adds to the difficulty of reestablishing credibility in the public eye. Contrarily, when transparency and frankness are employed during crisis management, long term benefits are normally realized (Fisher et al., 2011).

Opinion leaders are meant to communicate hope and credibility during a crisis. The preferred kind of leadership during a crisis are those who are accountable, trustworthy, and able to honor vows they have made of being truthful, which proves to be evasive when it can damage the image of the organization. These kinds of opinion leaders are the ones presented in televised interviews to boost the credibility of the organization (Kayes et al., 2012). Dissemination of misleading information is considered the responsibility of both the source and the media and there is need for a mechanism to hold both accountable at some level.

Unsubstantiated news, rumors and misleading information are the genesis of numerous crises, and it is increasingly becoming harder to differentiate genuine information from rumors (Jaques, 2010). Organizations need to be sure of the opinion leader they use to deliver their message (Kayes et al., 2012).

Opinion leaders counter disinformation by educating the public through verified channels of communication (Lammers, 2011; Gryzkiewicz & Fang, 2012). Organizations need to establish a robust communication strategy that delivers a clear, logical, and persuasive message towards combating false allegations (Cascio & Ramiro, 2016). The new generation of leaders therefore needs to be taught and emphasis put on continually evaluating events from multiple viewpoints. The decisions they are required to make have the potential to inflate or deflate a crisis situation (Powley & Taylor, 2014).

Intervening Variables

Government Policy

Governance is not immune to the influence of opinion leaders who at times have a great sway on the federal, state, and municipal levels. Additionally, they have an impact on specific government-mandated policy sectors. Individuals are finding it more challenging to attain desired outcomes from both the private and public sectors when government policies act as sources of crisis (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). While it was formerly conceivable to use a one-size-fits-all approach, there is now universal consensus that choice, voice, and empowerment are key components of successful public services (Cingöz & Akdoan, 2013). The government is always formulating new policies to address issues such as how people conduct themselves in business, culture, and society. It also uncannily observes the impact of these interactions towards ensuring fair interactions free of exploitation (Farndale, Horak, Phillips, & Beamond, 2019).

Social Cultural Complexities

The public's distrust of politicians has grown because of their frequent perception that politicians are attempting to persuade their opinion on a particular subject. Thus,

opinion leaders are frequently regarded as trustworthy and adrift, which sets them apart from the rest (Rose & Kim, 2011).

Numerous political issues are perplexing. It doesn't help that political leaders generally avoid expressing strong views on issues to avoid offending their voter base. In an ironic manner, when anything big happens in contemporary politics, the masses turn to those in positions of power for direction on how to respond to crisis (Masuda, 2015). These individuals are known as thought leaders. Individuals are more likely to believe a political message conveyed by a friend than an anonymous elected representative (Gryszkiewicz & Fang, 2012).

Empirical Literature Review

The top echelon leaders' active and visible participation during crisis communication creates the perception that the organization leadership is taking the crisis seriously. This was the case at General Motors whereby the CEO of the company was clearly visible throughout the crisis occasioned by financial difficulties. The strategies skillfully employed by General Motors included justification, ingratiation and accepting the responsibility for the crisis and accordingly offered an apology. It sought to justify it receiving a financial bailout from the government by communicating the importance for the nation of America to have a robust automotive industry. Further, the organizations used diminish strategy which is aimed at lessening the severity of the crisis by changing the leadership and clearly communicated its reluctance to release some of its workers which was an unavoidable eventuality. The role of leadership, especially by new CEO seems to have contributed significantly to the resolution of the crisis by offering a clear direction for the organization to follow throughout the crisis (Cooley & Cooley, 2011).

Sotirovic and McLeod (2001) noted the importance of opinion leadership and materialism in their study which addressed communication behavior, participation in politics and values. The study suggested those who are already post-materialism had a higher level of engagement than the materialistic. When it comes to addressing crisis, post materialistic leaders' strength to influence is in their attitude and they seek to create an environment that is conducive to problem solving. The shortfall is that social norms may not influence the target audience if there is no material gain. World views and actual behavior differ and hence the motive of crisis management intervention may be overcome by the actual attitude on the ground (Jansson et al., 2017).

During the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, opinion leaders faced unique challenges and were forced to make decisions on a day-to-day basis and communicate accurate information which kept being updated from moment to moment. The opinion leaders by virtue of their expertise reported to have faced insecurity and frustration while at times experienced moments of gratification. There was consistent communication among the Norwegian business leaders and both positive and negative feedback was encouraged. It was noted in the study some leaders were keenly aware of when they realized the crisis had brought about irrevocable changes while other leaders perceived the pandemic a learning experience for them and their followers and understandably, different actions to address the crisis were taken (Oen et al., 2022)

A study by Witt (2007) on firms as manifestations of entrepreneurial visions recommended opinion leaders to engage in tactical and intensive communication to develop positive cognitive common ground and socially shared implied knowledge on social norms.

An online community setting can be supported by various differentiating qualities of the opinion leader which act as a glue for the community (Li et al., 2013).

The assumption in this study was that connectivity to the online platforms was available to the target audience. In the Kenyan rural setting, such platforms are available to a few, and traditional means of communication need to be employed because the internet penetration in Kenya is at 40% as at 2021, implying over half of the nation does not have internet connectivity (Kemp, 2021).

Another study focusing on resolving crisis based on the crisis type and crisis communication strategy used, highlighted six dimensions in addressing crisis. The six dimensions were emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace and environment, social and environmental responsibility and financial performance. The reputation of an organization was found to significantly increase after five of six crisis communication strategies were used. However, when all six crisis communication management strategies were used, the reputation of the organization was noted to fall to a lower level than before the crisis. Opinion leaders seemed not to have a significant role in this study, yet it was unmistakably noted that influencers or opinion leaders have an impact on brand research based on need of information shared and preferences (Nohammer et al., 2022).

Conceptual Framework

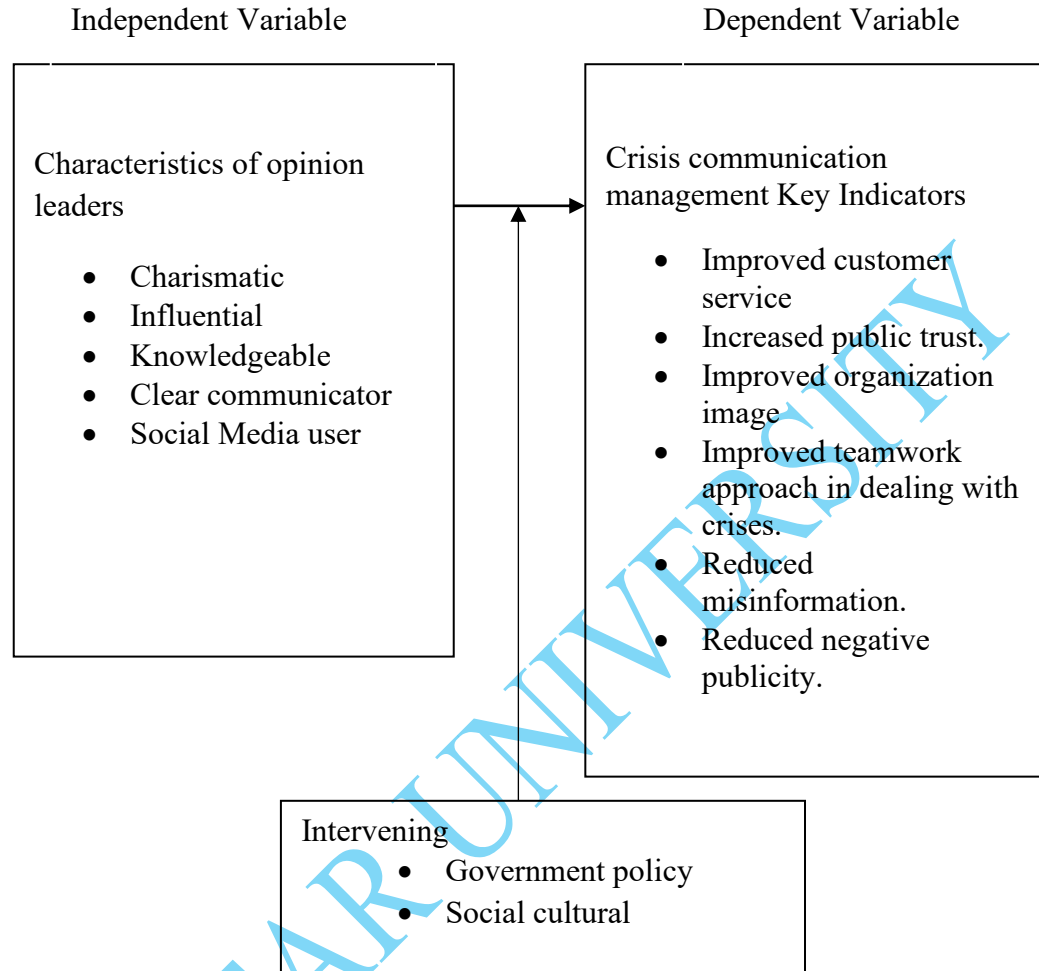


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Discussion

The model presentation of relationship of variables under study graphically is referred to as the conceptual framework (Kumar, 2008). A conceptual framework consists of an independent variable, dependent variable, and moderating variable (Connaway & Powell, 2010). A variable is defined as anything that has a quantity or quality that varies (Saunders et al., 2007). An independent variable is a variable believed to affect the dependent variable.

This is the variable that the researcher, will manipulate to see if it makes the dependent variable change (Sekaran, 2003). The dependent variable is the one that guides the study as it acts as the benchmark against which researcher will base the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In the research study the independent variables are the characteristics of opinion leaders which include charismatic, respectability, interest based, influential, knowledgeable, clear communicator and a social media user. The dependent variable is crisis communication management key indicators which include improved customer service, improved public trust, improved organization image, improved teamwork approach in dealing with crises, reduced misinformation and reduced negative publicity.

An intervening variable is a hypothetical variable used to explain causal links between other or otherwise alter the association between independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2010). In the research study the intervening variables are the government and Social cultural issues. The independent variable is opinion leaders and the indicators associated with it are charismatic, influential, knowledgeable, clear communicator and social media user. When the opinion leader is charismatic and influential, they are able to motivate individuals to keep going even in the midst of trials.

They can create an atmosphere where the crisis team can thrive. Additionally, when they are knowledgeable and communicate the crisis communication management plan clearly, the crisis team will have a clear direction to take in times of crisis and everyone will be aware of the role they are to play in resolving the crisis.

An opinion leader who uses social media effectively will be able to take immediate action towards addressing the crisis either by denying it, accusing the attacker, or looking for a scape goat as they formulate a more robust short-term and long-term response strategy.

The dependent variable is crisis communication management. When opinion leaders take appropriate crisis communication management strategies, it will reflect in improved customer care, increased public trust due to restored confidence in the organization, improved organizational image among its stakeholders; improved teamwork approach in dealing with crisis as team members grow in competence in handling crisis situation.

Further, there will be reduced misinformation as opinion leaders will be instrumental in passing on the right information. The negative publicity that may have developed from the crisis will also be reduced due to positive and proactive steps taken by opinion leaders in life with the crisis communication management strategy. The intervening variables of government policy and social cultural aspects do influence the context of interaction between opinion leaders and crisis communication management, but they will not be discussed further in this particular study.

Summary

This chapter discussed the situational crisis communication theory which formed the basis of the theoretical framework developed in the chapter. General and empirical literature highlighted the various aspects of opinion leaders and crisis communication management. A conceptual framework was developed that shows a diagrammatical representation of the perceived interaction of opinion leadership and crisis communication

management. Intervening variables of government policy and social culture were indicated because they influence how opinion leaders address crisis communication management.

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter isolates the research methods and techniques that will be in the collection of data. The research design, population, sampling, pre-testing, and data collecting tools will also be discussed. The procedures and analysis techniques on the collected data will be identified.

Research Design

Research design refers to the entire approach of conducting the research study as it provides the structure through which the data will be collected and analyzed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). A researcher needs to have a design that allows for flexibility, comprehensive, efficient, and cost effective (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The study will use descriptive research to establish the observed relationship between the variables under study (Sakyi et al., 2020). Descriptive research addresses issues such as what, where and when (Kothari, 2014).

Research Method

The study employed quantitative methods whereby mathematical and statistical methods were used in the analysis of the data (Kothari, 2014). Quantitative research is the phenomenon of organized query where statistical numerical data is collected. It takes an objective approach, can be replicated, findings are generalizable, and the variable are tested to establish cause and effect relationship (Hassan, 2022). Statistical breakdown is performed involving various strategies such as inferential statistics, structured protocol, and questionnaire with a restricted range of pre-determined answers (Slevitch, 2011).

Population of the Study

Population comprises of the entire collection of the individuals, elements and groups that is being investigated as the focus the research enquiry (Ngechu, 2004). It is the full set of individuals, objects or cases under study which exhibit the common attributes of interest to the research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) The population comprised of all the permanent staff at Kipeto Energy who were 60, the social management team who were 6 and the community initiative committee, which comprised of 13 individuals, a total of 79 respondents.

Target Population

The target population is the population around which the researcher will seek to generalize the findings of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population is a sample; it is a subgroup of the population that has the unique characteristics of interest to the study (Singh, 2007). The sample size is the optimal number of the elements selected from the population that meet the criteria of dependability and representativeness necessary (Kumar, 2008). Not all opinion leaders are formally educated, especially in the Kenyan culture. Some elders are who have no formal education play a critical role in averting crisis as traditional governing structures are invoked (Wamalwa, 2008).

Kipeto Energy set up several committees to assist in its operation and to manage crisis. The social management team had 6 members drawn from various departments including human resource and accounting. The community initiative committee comprised of 13 individuals who are male and female youth, men, women, church elders, elders, pastor, and a chief. All these individuals brought a particular and unique perspective of the community and are instrumental in addressing crises that affect their unique sphere of

influence. The elders also have the authority to address matters such as land disputes and allocation on which the project is based.

Additionally, the religious leader and youths are uniquely placed to understand and pick out matters that would result in crisis within their sphere of influence. When the crises are beyond the capacity of the social management team and community initiative committee, it goes to the board of directors comprising of the senior director and, two other members of the board. Therefore, the total target population is 22.

Table 3.1: Target Population

Designation	No.
Directorate	3
Social management team	6
Community Initiative committee	13
Total	22

Sampling Technique

Sampling technique is an exact description of the procedure used to select entities that will comprise the sample of the study. This study will employ purposive sampling because the study seeks to focus on specific aspects within the population which are of interest to the study (Babbie, 2008). Not everyone at Kipeto Energy is an opinion leader and hence opinion leaders were purposefully chosen to participate in the study because they had the characteristics needed in the study.

Types of Data

There are two types of data in research which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to original data gathered by the researcher for the first time directly from the source through various methods. Some of the methods employed to collect primary data is experiments, interviews, observation, and survey (Babbie, 2010). Primary

data is considered the most valuable sort of data because it is directly got from the source at its location (Berg & Lune, 2012). On the other hand, secondary data is material that has already been extracted from its primary source and has already undergone some form of analysis and the researcher uses it in their own study (Creswell, 2013).

According to Kothari (2004), qualitative data is non-numerical data that is based on perception and is gathered through one-on-one interviews, observation, or focused group discussion. It is highly subjective in nature. Quantitative data on the other hand is characterized by numerical value in form of number and each set of data has a numerical value (Bryman, 2003). This kind of data is normally gathered through polls, questionnaires or surveys given done on a subset of the population (Brians & Leonard, 2011). This study utilized primary data and quantitative data. This study collected primary data and quantitative analysis was done.

Data collection Methods and Instruments

A data collections instrument is a tool for collecting data. The type of tool engaged in the data collection process depends on the kind of research and type of data the researcher is interested in. The tool, however, needs to be reliable and valid (Saunders et al., 2007).

There are different methods that can be employed in the collection of primary data. Primary data is when the researcher is the first to collect original data from the source. Primary data can be collected through interviews, observation, or questionnaires and each of the methods has its merits and demerits (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

The questionnaires were primarily administered to the respondents in person by the researcher in a timely manner. The researcher endeavored to ensure the respondents

understood the purpose and that any responses given to the researcher, were purely for academic nature of the exercise. A questionnaire was used in the collection of data, and it had both open and closed ended questions. Open ended questions were geared towards obtaining additional information that may have been overlooked in the closed ended questions.

Pretesting

Pre-testing is the process of evaluating various qualities of the tool including its validity, reliability, practicability, and sensitivity before it is utilized for actual data collection. Pretesting is useful for detecting mistakes early in the formulation of the questions and if the questions are covering the scope of the study (Ruel et al., 2015).

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) ten percent of the sample size is adequate to form the pre-test group. KenGen was the site for pre-testing and ten individuals were the pretesting sample size. KenGen was chosen because it belongs to the same energy sector and has encountered similar challenges while implementing power projects across the nation. The respondents at KenGen had an actual understanding of the challenges experienced in the energy sector of which Kipeto Energy is a part of.

An illustrative example is the pretesting of crisis management procedures by KenGen and its successful management of an actual crisis. In Kenya, where hydroelectric and other renewable energy generation plays a significant role in the national energy grid, crisis management is of paramount importance. The example of a KenGen can be seen in its approach to crisis management. Before the company faced a real crisis, such as a severe dam leak or equipment malfunction, it undertook mock crisis management activities. These activities involved simulating crisis scenarios through drills and exercises, engaging all

relevant stakeholders, including engineers, maintenance crews, and emergency response teams. These mock drills allowed the company to identify potential vulnerabilities and bottlenecks in their crisis response procedures.

During one such mock up exercise, KenGen discovered that their communication systems were inadequate for coordinating an emergency response across the vast institution. They also recognized that some employees lacked clarity about their roles in a crisis situation. As a result of these findings, the company made important adjustments, including improving their communication infrastructure and revising their crisis response protocols to clarify roles and responsibilities. They also ensured that their emergency response teams were adequately trained and equipped to handle a range of potential crises.

When an actual crisis occurred with regards to a major equipment malfunction at one of its electricity generation sites that could potentially escalate - the company was better prepared. The improved communication systems allowed for swift coordination among teams, and the revised roles and responsibilities ensured a more organized and effective response. This proactive approach not only prevented the crisis from escalating but also minimized the impact on operations and, more importantly, on the local communities that depend on the electric power generated. The organization was able to identify weaknesses, make necessary adjustments and was better prepared for real crises.

This proactive approach ensures not only the reliability of energy supply but also the safety of the environment and local communities that depend on hydroelectric power. Crisis management sets the stage for a more effective and resilient response to unforeseen challenges in the complex field of electricity energy production.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent the experiment in the study represents things that happen in a broader spectrum. Transferability is however not always applicable because of the different context in which the research is carried out (RogerGomm, 2008). The researcher can however give clear descriptions so that those wishing to use the study can transfer the finding to their own study (Nowell et al., 2017). The results of the study can be used in other energy sectors such as wind energy or novel projects which are anticipated to experience similar crisis communication management challenges that have been considered in this study and how opinion leaders can assist in addressing the matter.

Reliability

Reliability is the ability of the same results being provided by the research tool when the process is replicated. The reliability of the instrument will be tested through the test-retest method. Cronbach's alpha methodology is based on internal consistency, and it will be used to test reliability of the data. Cronbach's alpha measures the average of measurable items and its correlation.

A reading of 0.70 is the acceptable level above which the scale will be deemed to be reliable (Bryman & Bell, 2013). According to Kothari (2014) clarity is enhanced when the questionnaire is relatively short, simple, and multiple questions and vagueness are avoided even as dichotomous questions are used and thereby enhance reliability. Reliability is essential because it addresses the consistency of the research instrument and procedures employed during the research.

Data Analysis Plan

Data processing and analysis involves the transforming of raw data into meaningful information which can be interpreted as the findings of the research exercise (Crossman, 2019). To clean and code the raw data so that it can be interpreted, the data will be entered into SPSS program, The computerized program software version 22 can manipulate data and give statistical presentations that are understandable (Kothari, 2004). The data was presented using descriptive statistics whereby charts and tables were used to present the finding (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Research ethics refers to the moral principles that ought to be observed when the research the research is being carried out. They are guidelines safeguarding how people ought to interact ethically in the research process. According to Gall et al. (2003), ethics gives the rules and values on the actions to be taken during research for it to be considered to have upheld morals. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Daystar University Ethics Review Board (DU-ERB) and a national research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before proceeding to the field to collect data Thus, being aware of ethical problems would aid in the prevention of unaccounted-for errors. Furthermore, the researcher also sought an official authorization from Kipeto Energy management so that the respondents are informed of the research, and they are aware the researcher has consent from the organization.

Throughout the investigation, the highest level of objectivity should be maintained in conversations and analysis. To develop and maintain a high level of trust, honesty will be observed in all interactions (Kothari, 2004).

The respondents were not coerced to respond to the questionnaire even though their willingness to participate is a crucial factor in the study. The potential respondents were informed clearly of the purpose of the study and were assured of their anonymity. They were informed that they have the right to not participate in the research and that they can opt out of the research at any time even after engaging with the researcher and the questionnaire.

Summary

This chapter identified the research design to be used in the study which is descriptive design. This enabled the researcher to gain an accurate depiction of the organization as it is in regard to the variables under study. The population of the study was Kipeto Energy with the target population being opinion leaders who have the necessary information for this study. Pretesting was done at KenGen, an energy producing company, so as to test the data collection's reliability in capturing the right information required for the study. Respondents were informed of their right to participate in the study or opt out.

The researcher endeavored to uphold all ethical guidelines by getting the ethical permit from Daystar University and the research permit from NACOSTI.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of analysis of data and findings of this study. The socio-demographic factors followed are presented in tables and figures of frequencies and percentages for each social demographic factor. The final part of this section dealt with research objectives of this study which are to identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management, second objective was to identify other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy, and the third objective was to assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy Similarly.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Response Rate

Response rate refers to the percentage of eligible questionnaires returned to the researcher after issuance to individuals in the sample size. The researcher administered 20 questionnaires to respondents from Kipeto energy, in this case 10 questionnaires were returned fully filled, which made up 50% of the response rate, analysis require 50% and above (Kothari,2004). A good response rate is recommended due to its ability to enhance representatives which in turn enhances the reliability and validity of the data and the accompanied research findings.

Social Demographic Data

This section provides a summary of the respondent's background, which includes their gender, age, position held at Kipeto energy, number of years working at Kipeto energy, Education level, these results give readers general understanding of the community under study, the result are presented in sub sequence section.

Social Demographics

Table 4.1: Social Demographics

Socio-Demographic	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Female	2 (20%)
Male	8 (80%)
Age	
18-28	2 (20%)
29-39	4 (40%)
40-50	3 (30%)
61 and above	1 (10%)
Position	
Non-Management	3 (30%)
Social community committee	4 (40%)
Supervisory	2 (20%)
Top Management	1 (10%)
Education Level	
College Level	3 (30%)
Primary Level	1 (10%)
University Level	6 (60%)
Service Years	
Between 1-2	1 (10%)
Between 3-4	2 (20%)
Between 5-6	3 (30%)
Seven and above	4 (40%)

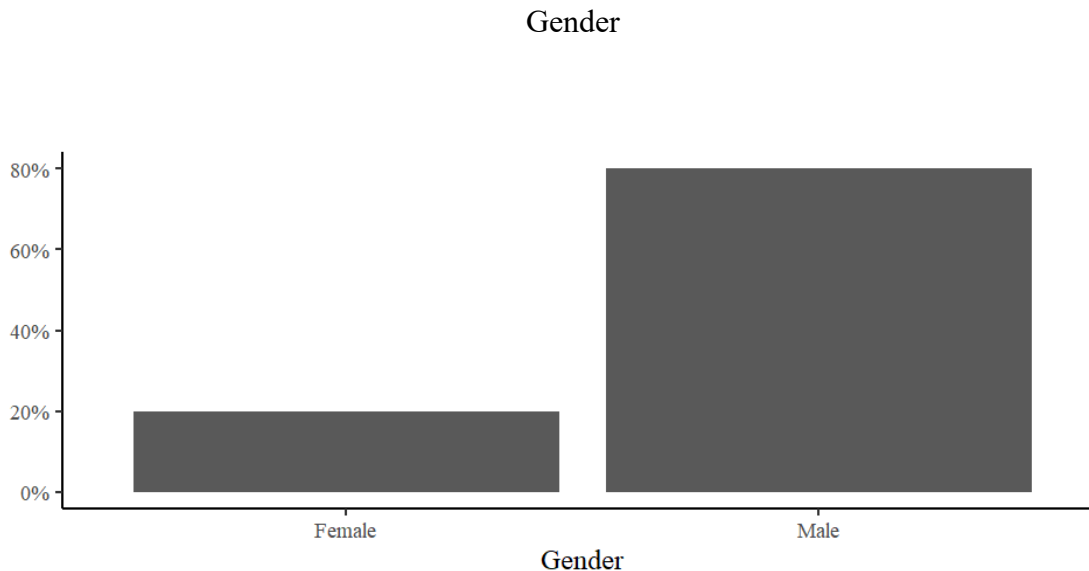


Figure 4.1: Gender of Respondents

The results illustrated in Figure 4.1, showed that 80% of opinion leaders in Kipeto energy were male as only 20% were female. The imbalance between male and female meant that Kipeto energy believed men to be better opinion shapers and opinion leaders in general than women. The tenacity and intelligence of men as opinion leaders coupled with their ability to communicate clearly and authoritative earn them better positions as opinion leaders than women.

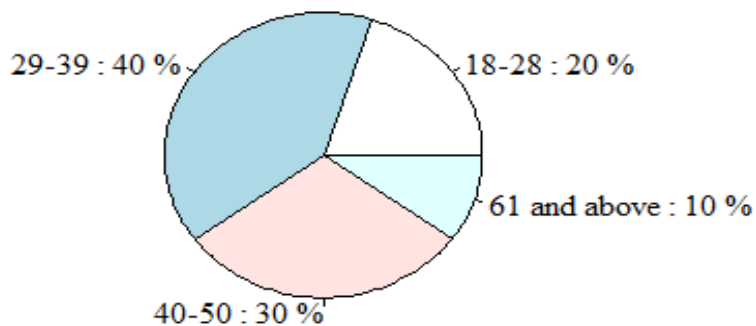


Figure 4.2: Age of Respondents

Most of the opinion leaders at Kipeto energy were aged between 29 and 39 (40%) followed by individuals between 40 and 50 years old (30%), then 18 to 28 years olds (20%) while only 10% of the opinion leaders were aged above 60 years. The results showed that middle aged individuals are the most opinion leaders for Kipeto energy.

These are individuals that are not too young to express inexperience and ignorance and not too old to exhibit lethargy. These are individuals at the prime of life, full of energy, information, experience, and intelligence, vibrant and dynamic.

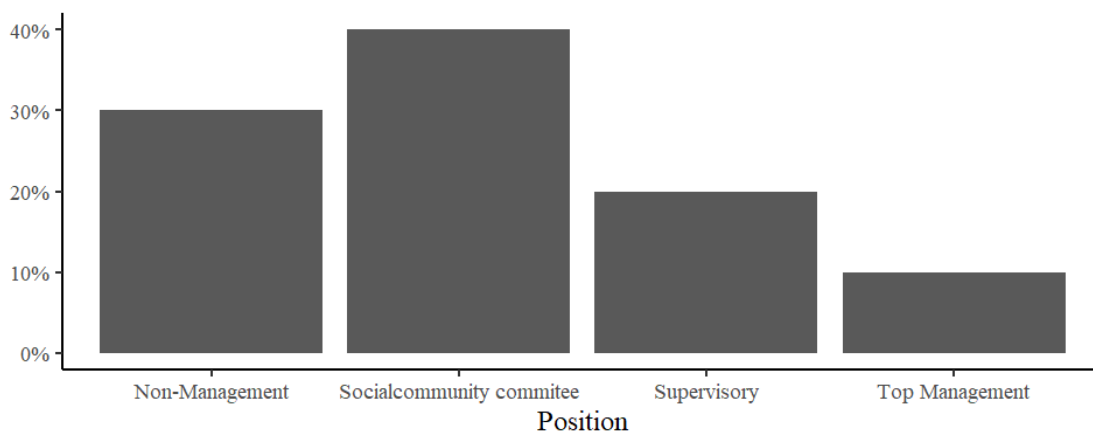


Figure 4.3: Position of Respondents

Most of the opinion leaders belonged to the social community committee within Kipeto Energy (40%) while 30% did not hold any managerial position. Only 20% were supervisors and only 10% held a management role in the firm. The results, therefore, showed that opinion leaders essentially were drawn both from top management level with the majority holding non-managerial roles.

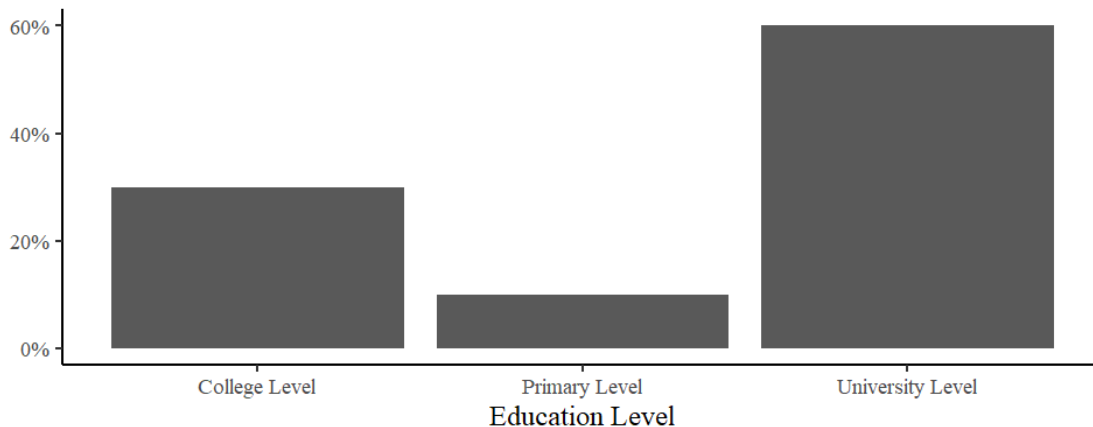


Figure 4.4: Education Level of Respondents

The majority of the opinion leaders that responded to this study had attained a university education and thus the majority were degree holders (60%) followed by college level graduates (30%) while only 10% had only attained primary education. Therefore, opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy were drawn from a pool of university educated individuals with adequate knowledge and skills to shape opinions in the country.

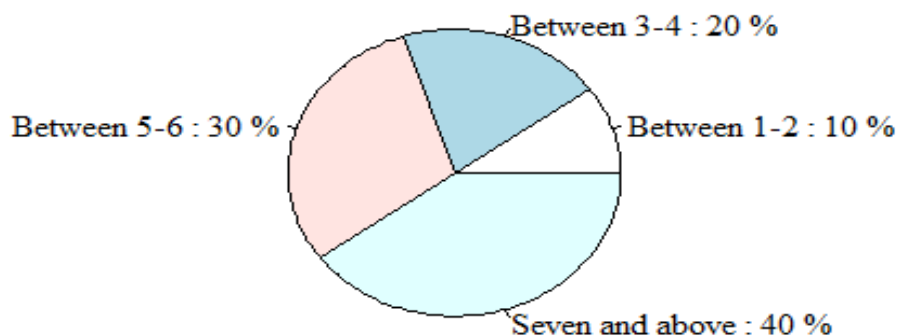


Figure 4.5: Years of Service of Respondents at Kipeto Energy

Most of the opinion leaders had been working at Kipeto Energy for a period above 7 years (40%), 30% had been working between 5 and 6 years, 20% had worked for up to 4

years while only 10% had worked for only one year. Opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy majorly had been working at the firm for more than five years thus enhancing their capabilities in shaping opinions through experience.

Awareness and Engagement

Table 4.2: Opinion Leadership

Opinion Leadership	Frequency (%) ¹
Opinion leader	9 (90%)
crisis communication management aware	10 (100%)
crisis communication engagement	9 (90%)

The illustration in Table 4.2, showed that 90% of the respondents considered themselves opinion leaders while only one individual did not group themselves among opinion leaders. In addition, all respondents were aware of crises communication management strategies and principles and 90% had been engaged in crises communication management. The results therefore showed that the data provided by the respondents was credible and reliable in determining the role of opinion leaders in crises communication management.

To Identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management.

The first objective of this study was to identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeto Energy in crisis communication management. The results are presented as per specific variable.

Table 4.3: Use of Opinion Leaders

Employing Opinion Leaders in Crises Communication	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Moderate Extent	Little Extent	No Extent
The organization uses opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to stakeholders	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The organization employs opinion leaders who are trusted areas to communicate a message	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Opinion leaders are given access to the organizations leadership to contribute to activities affecting the environments, internal and external	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
The organization actively seeks opinion leaders who are trustworthy to engage in promotions/campaigns.	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The organization offers training to opinion leaders so that they communicate the right message	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)
Opinion leaders are made aware of information that is not readily available to the public	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
The organization has a pool of opinion leaders suitable to address areas when need arises	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)

The use of opinion leaders in Kipeto Energy was as illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**, the majority of the respondents (80%) greatly believed that Kipeto Energy used opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to stakeholders and that the opinion leaders employed in shaping the opinions of stakeholders are trusted and competent individuals. The respondents reported that to a greater extent opinion leaders

are engaged and involved in organizational leadership and contribute to both external and internal business environments affecting the organizations.

The organization continuously seeks trustworthy and credible opinion leaders as well as training newly employed opinion leaders on the mission and vision of the organization. The organization makes the opinion leaders aware of information unavailable in the public domain to a considerable extent. Most of the respondents reported that there existed a pool of opinion leaders equipped to address different areas as needs arise.

Table 4.4: Characteristic

Characteristic	N = 10 ¹
Has the efforts to incorporate opinion leaders improved the image of the organization in the community?	9 (90%)
Have opinion leaders played a role in averting the crisis that the organization was not aware of?	
Yes	10 (100%)

The table above indicates that according to 90% of the respondents, the efforts of the firm to incorporate opinion leaders have significantly improved the image of the organization in the community among stakeholders and clients. In addition, all respondents reported that opinion leaders were able to avert crises that the organization did not know existed.

To identify other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy.

The second objective of this study was to identify other crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeto Energy, the results are shown below,

Table 4.5: Crises Communication Strategies

Crises Communication Strategies	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Moderate Extent	Little Extent	No Extent
The organization has a policy in place for addressing crisis Communication when a crisis arises	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Ad-hoc meetings are held to address crisis Communication when crises arise.	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
There are particular people in the organization tasked with identifying areas of potential crisis in relation to the organization and its operations.	6 (60%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Crisis communication management is addressed only when crisis arise	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)
The organization has a specified budget to address c crisis communication management	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
The organization has regular meeting s to address management of crisis its.	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The organization keeps track of all past crisis Communication management interventions.	7 (70%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
The organization uses successful crisis communication interventions that other organizations have employed.	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
There are crisis Communication management training programs that are carried out at regular intervals	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)

The results of crises communication strategies illustrated in Table 4.5, showed, according to majority of the respondents, the organization has a policy in place for crises communication meant to address crises as they arise where ad-hoc crises meetings are held. Majority of the respondents (90%) reported that there were particular people in the organization tasked with the responsibility of identifying areas where crises might arise and thus create an opportunity to address them immediately, they erupt, however, crises communication management only happened when crises happened.

Regarding budgets for crises management, 20% of the respondents reported that there usually are no budget allocations for crises management. Nevertheless, the organization held regular meetings to address management of crises while keep track of all previous management crises and how they were managed through opinion leadership. Kipeto Energy utilized crises management developed by other organizations and has programs meant to train individuals on crises management on a regular basis according to majority of the respondents (80%).

Table 4.6: Crises Communication Incidents

Characteristic	N = 10 ¹
Community social Incidents	
Community social Incidents	2 (20%)
Labour/Employment	4 (40%)
Payments	4 (40%)

¹n (%)

According to respondents in this study most of the incidents came from labor or employment issues regarding payments while only 20% came from the communities. Therefore, the major issues that Kipeto Energy had to contend with belong to the internal business environment thus originating within the organization.

To assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy.

The third objective of this study was to assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeto Energy.

Table 4.7: The Impact of Opinion Leaders in Crises Communication Management

Impact of Crises Communication Management	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Moderate Extent	Little Extent	No Extent
Opinion leaders have influenced the public perception about the organization	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Opinion leaders have played a critical role in bridging the gap between the community and the organization during crisis.	6 (60%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
The organization has on occasions used the wrong opinion leaders during which prolonged the crisis.	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)
There has been no significant change when opinion leaders are employed	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)
During crisis communication, the opinion leaders are the face of the organization.	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
Opinion leaders have contributed to reducing misinformation during a crisis	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Opinion leaders contribute to improved teamwork during crisis management	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
The image of the organization is improved after opinion leaders are engaged during crisis management	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Customers receive improved service after opinion leaders	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)

Impact of Crises Communication Management	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Moderate Extent	Little Extent	No Extent
communicate their grievances to the organization after a crisis					
There is increased trust between the organization and the community after a crisis has been resolved through crisis communication management initiatives.	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)

Opinion leaders are crucial in shaping stakeholders' and public's perception of an organization. The results illustrated in table 4.6 regarding the impact of opinion leadership attest to that fact. All respondents reported that opinion leaders had influenced the perception of the public as concerns their organization. Respondents also stated that opinion leaders had played a critical role in bridging the gap between the community and the organization during crisis and that at no single instance has the organization employed the services of incompetent opinion leaders that ever led to a prolonged crisis.

Therefore, the organization had always employed services competent, trustworthy, and informed opinion leaders that always averted crises before irreparable damage is done. The respondents refuted any claim that there has been no significant change when opinion leaders are employed but reiterated that opinion leaders were always the face of the organization whenever a crisis erupted. There has always been a significant change when opinion leaders are used in a crisis whereby opinion leaders have always reduced and addressed misinformation in the public domain thereby improving the image and perception of the organization among members of the public. In addition, opinion leaders contributed to improved teamwork within the organization thereby improving delivery of

service to customers and ultimately leading to a trustworthy healthy relationship between the organization and its clients.

Therefore, opinion leaders have a significant impact on the performance of organizations. In the first place, apart from averting crises, they improve the work environment, provide customer grievances, and offer ways of improving service delivery and ultimately fostering a better relationship between the organization and its clients. Secondly, the negative impacts of misinformation are mitigated and thwarted through opinion leadership such that threats during crises are transformed into opportunities by making the public get a better understanding of the organization. Apart from averting crises, opinion leaderships bolster organizational performance.

Table 4.8: Role of Opinion Leaders in the Future

Characteristic	N =
	10 ¹
Do you foresee a greater or lesser role for opinion leaders in crisis communication management?	7 (70%)

¹n (%)

Most of the respondents foresaw a greater role of opinion leaders in crises communication management in the future to shape public perception.

Summary of the Key Findings

From the findings of this study majority of the respondents from Kipeto Energy 80% of opinion leaders in Kipeto Energy were male as only 20% were female, The imbalance between male and female meant that Kipeto energy believed men to be better opinion sharers and opinion leaders in general than women.

Majority of opinion leaders at Kipeto energy were aged between 29 and 39 (40%), the results showed that middle aged individuals are the most opinion leaders for kipeto

energy, most of the opinion leaders belonged to the social community committee within Kipeto Energy (40%) while 30% did not hold any managerial position. Only 20% were supervisors and only 10% held a management role in the firm.

Most of the opinion leaders that responded to this study had attained a university education and thus the majority were degree holders (60%), most of the opinion leaders had been working at Kipeto Energy for a period above 7 years (40%).

It was noted that the organization makes the opinion leaders aware of information unavailable in the public domain to a considerable extent. Most of the respondents reported that there existed a pool of opinion leaders equipped to address different areas as needs arise. Regarding budgets for crises management, 20% of the respondents reported that there usually are no budget allocations for crises management.

Opinion leaders are crucial in shaping stakeholders' and public's perception of an organization. The respondents stated that opinion leaders had played a critical role in bridging the gap between the community and the organization during crisis and that at no single instance has the organization employed the services of incompetent opinion leaders that ever led to a prolonged crisis.

Summary

This chapter focused on the Presentation analysis and interpretation of the collected data in line with the study objectives, descriptive analysis was adopted in form of frequencies, percentages, and score.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

This chapter covers the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies. The conclusion of this study relates directly to the three objectives and suggestions for further research are also presented in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management: a case study of Kipeto Energy, Kenya.

Discussion of the Key Findings

The first objective sought to determine the role of opinion leaders in Kipeto Energy regarding crises management through crises communication management strategies. This study identified the major role of opinion leaders as delivering specific and relevant messages to the public and stakeholders.

Opinion leaders are granted access to leadership in the organization and thus access to privileged information unavailable to the public. Opinion leaders with their significant following and influence play a vital role in disseminating accurate and timely information during crisis, through various platform they can share critical updates, safety instructions and essential guidelines to keep the Public informed (Chen et al.,2017), the findings from our study showed that 90% of the respondents considered themselves opinion leaders while only one individual did not group themselves among opinion leaders. This is influenced by various factors including their expertise in a particular field, their ability to communicate effectively and their social network (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), The perception of being an

opinion leader can vary significantly based on individual personalities, roles, organizational cultures, and industries (Lamm et al.,2014).

Opinion leaders play a vital role in disseminating accurate timely information during crisis, the access granted enables the opinion leaders to provide insightful guidance as well as gain important information that can be packaged for delivery to stakeholders and the public (Lundby, 2019). The majority of the respondents (80%) greatly believed that Kipeto Energy used opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to stakeholders and that the opinion leaders employed in shaping the opinions of stakeholders are trusted and competent individuals. The findings show good strategies used by Kipeto Energy in obtaining and using opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to individuals.

From the responses of the respondents, it was noted that Kipeto Energy continuously looks for trustworthy and credible opinion leaders as well as training newly employed opinion leaders on the mission and vision of the organization whereby 50% agreed with this as individual, these findings agreed with a study by Flanagan & Metzger, 2001, which reported that opinion leaders should be perceived as credible and trustworthy by their peers. The organization makes the opinion leaders aware of information unavailable in the public domain to a considerable extent.

The researcher wanted to understand if the efforts to incorporate opinion leaders improved the image of the organization in the community, most respondents agreed with this statement by 90%, opinion leaders with their influence and ability to shape public opinion can indeed positively impact how organizations are perceived (Brown & Hayes, 2008), further Zhang and Watts (2008), indicated that opinion leaders can help

organizations establish more authentic and relatable image as their endorsement is often seen as genuine and unbiased.

This study used Situational Crisis Communication Theory, because it provided critical components relating to crisis communication, the main occupation of opinion leaders is to shape the perception of the public regarding the organization thus bridging the gaps between the clients or general public and the organization thereby preventing misinformation in the public domain, opinion leaders can encourage collective action and resources mobilization thereby strengthening community resilience (Levine, 2015).

The second objective sought to identify strategies employed in crises communication management by opinion leaders in Kipeto Energy limited.

Opinion leaders play a crucial role in crisis communication management by employing various strategies to effectively address and navigate crisis, the result from this study showed that from majority of the respondents, the organization has a policy in place for crises communication meant to address crises as they arise where ad-hoc crises meetings are held.

The study found that Kipeto Energy has policies in place guiding crises management in addition to having a set budget for opinion leaders during crises management 90 % of individual reported that there were particular people in the organization tasked with the responsibility of identifying areas where crises might arise. There are particular people employed to identify areas within the operation of the organization where crises are likely to erupt. Such individuals keep track of interventions in past crises thereby creating a preparedness plan for when crises appear.

Kipeto Energy has a policy that only when crises erupt does crises management through opinion leaders start. Ad-hoc meetings and other regular meetings are part of the strategies employed to intervene crises these finding align with a study by Zhang et al., 2018 whereby opinion leaders are expected to analyses and interprets crisis by heling individual to understand the situation better and its potential implications, also it's the responsibility of the opinion leaders to share accurate and verified information in the organization to counter misinformation and rumors during crisis (Chen et al.,2017).

Opinion leaders become the face of the organization whenever a crisis appears and are tasked with managing and mitigating the effects of misinformation regarding the affected areas. Success intervention strategies employed by other organizations are adopted by Kipeto energy and are modified to fit the requirements of the organization.

Finally, crises communication management training programs are regularly conducted by the organization to enhance the capabilities of the opinion leaders and keep them abreast of emerging issues.

Regarding budgets for crises management, 20% of the respondents reported that there usually are no budget allocations for crises management. Nevertheless, the organization held regular meetings to address management of crises while keep track of all previous management crises and how they were managed through opinion leadership. Kipeto energy utilized crises management developed by other organizations and has programs meant to train individuals on crises management on a regular basis according to majority of the respondents (80%).

The third objective sought to determine the impact of opinion leaders in crises communication management at Kipeto Energy.

The greatest impact that opinion leaders had in Kipeto Energy was shaping or influencing public perception regarding the organization, these findings align with a study by Rowney and Smithson, (2012), who reported that one impact of opinion leaders is to shape public perception and attitudes towards the crisis, influencing how individual interpret the situation and how they respond to it, Another important impact from the finding is reducing misinformation about the organization, opinion leaders can counteract misinformation and rumors by providing accurate information and correcting false narratives during a crisis(Liu et al., 2018). Opinion leaders have always clarified issues and put the records straight regarding misleading information within the public domain.

The consequence of clarifying information by reducing misinformation had another impact which was the bridging of the gap between the public, stakeholders, and the organization. Ultimately, the image and reputation of the organization has tremendously improved before the public and trust is restored between the clients and the organization. Service delivery was enhanced as opinion leaders bolstered teamwork during crises. The result is an overall improved organizational performance.

Conclusion

The major role of opinion leaders is shaping and influencing the public perception regarding the organization. This is achieved by delivering relevant messages to the public, thereby countering misinformation in the public domain. The strategies employed include training programs, having a crises communication management budge dedicated for that purpose, having individuals dedicated in identifying areas that may cause concern and adopting successful strategies from other organizations.

The ultimate impact is the improvement of the image of the organization, improved customer satisfaction through improved service delivery, restoring trust of the public regarding the organization, enhancing teamwork, and bridging the gap between clients and stakeholder, thereby improving and bolstering overall organization performance.

Significance of Theory and Research Findings

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) plays a pivotal role in understanding and effectively addressing the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management, as demonstrated by a case study of Kipeto Energy in Kenya. A key finding from the thesis report on this case study underscores the importance of SCCT in tailoring crisis communication strategies to the specific circumstances of the situation. In the Kipeto Energy case, it is revealed that the crisis pertained to environmental concerns surrounding their wind energy project, thus categorizing it as an environmental crisis within the SCCT framework. Opinion leaders, including local environmental activists, government officials responsible for environmental policy, and community leaders, held significant influence over public perceptions.

The study highlighted the necessity of recognizing the reputational threat and assessing the stance of these opinion leaders toward the crisis. SCCT's guidance in determining the crisis type and severity was invaluable in developing tailored communication strategies. Kipeto Energy engaged opinion leaders through targeted communication efforts, addressing their concerns, sharing mitigation plans, and seeking their support. This case study underscores that SCCT serves as a vital tool for organizations to navigate the complex landscape of crisis communication by adapting strategies

according to the situational context and effectively managing the impact of opinion leaders on public perception and reputation.

Furthermore, the case study of Kipeto Energy in Kenya demonstrates that the Situational Crisis Communication Theory aids in creating a proactive and strategic approach to crisis communication. By identifying and engaging with opinion leaders who had the potential to either exacerbate or mitigate the reputational threat posed by the environmental crisis, Kipeto Energy was able to enhance its credibility and demonstrate a commitment to responsible environmental practices. The report highlighted that SCCT's adaptability allowed for ongoing monitoring and adjustment of the communication strategies as the crisis evolved and as opinion leaders' responses evolved. This dynamic approach allowed Kipeto Energy to build stronger relationships with opinion leaders and stakeholders, ultimately influencing public opinion positively.

The case of Kipeto Energy in Kenya not only showcases the practical application of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory but also highlights its relevance in addressing crises in a global context. As organizations face increasingly complex and diverse challenges, the ability to engage opinion leaders effectively and tailor communication strategies based on the crisis situation remains paramount. In conclusion, this case study reinforces the importance of SCCT as a strategic framework that empowers organizations to navigate the influence of opinion leaders, manage reputational threats, and respond effectively to crises, ultimately safeguarding their long-term sustainability and public trust.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the study's findings. According to the responses given by the participants in the research, to investigate how opinion leaders wield influence during a crisis, exploring their roles in shaping public opinion. Disseminating information and influencing decision making, also by analyzing their ability to enhance or hinder crisis communication strategies and outcomes. Evaluate the communication channels used by opinion leaders during crises.

Assess the impact of opinion leaders in shaping employees understanding compliance with safety measures and overall crisis management.

Provide practical recommendations for crisis communication strategies that leverage the influence of opinion leaders.

The key research findings regarding the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management, as exemplified by the case study of Kipeto Energy in Kenya, underscore the profound significance of understanding and effectively engaging with these influential figures during a crisis. In this context, opinion leaders wielded considerable influence over public perception, policy decisions, and the overall reputation of Kipeto Energy. Their opinions and actions had the potential to either exacerbate or ameliorate the crisis. As revealed in the case study, the company's success in managing the environmental concerns surrounding their wind energy project hinged on its ability to recognize and respond to the opinions of these influential individuals.

First and foremost, the case study demonstrates that opinion leaders serve as crucial gatekeepers in shaping the narrative of a crisis. Their voices often carry more weight, and

their views can sway public sentiment and policy decisions. In the Kipeto Energy case, local environmental activists and government officials had the power to significantly affect the project's future. Thus, it was imperative for the company to identify these opinion leaders and address their concerns proactively.

Second, the findings emphasize that organizations must assess the reputational threat posed by opinion leaders. The report highlighted that failing to recognize the potential impact of these influencers on public perception could lead to severe reputational damage. By categorizing the crisis within the Situational Crisis Communication Theory framework, Kipeto Energy was able to gauge the level of reputational threat and tailor their communication strategies accordingly.

Third, the case study illustrates that proactive engagement with opinion leaders is paramount. Kipeto Energy's communication efforts targeted these key figures, addressing their specific concerns, sharing information about mitigation plans, and seeking their support. This approach not only helped alleviate concerns but also demonstrated the company's commitment to transparency and responsible environmental practices.

Lastly, the case study underscores the dynamic nature of crisis communication management. It is an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring and adaptation. The influence and stance of opinion leaders can change over time. Therefore, staying attuned to their responses and adjusting communication strategies accordingly allowed Kipeto Energy to build stronger relationships with these influential stakeholders and mitigate reputational risks effectively.

In conclusion, the research findings from the case study of Kipeto Energy in Kenya illuminate the critical role opinion leaders play in crisis communication management. Their impact extends far beyond immediate stakeholders, making them pivotal in determining the overall outcome of a crisis. This case study serves as a valuable illustration of the real-world significance of recognizing, engaging with, and responding to opinion leaders during a crisis, ultimately safeguarding an organization's reputation and public trust.

Recommendations for Further Research

Compare the role and impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication, and understand how cultural contexts influence the selection, influence, and effectiveness of opinion leaders in crisis scenarios.

Explore how AI can assist opinion leaders in crisis communication, including sentiment analysis, content recommendation and real time monitoring of employee sentiments.

Investigate strategies for fostering collaborative partnership between governments, public institutions, and opinion leaders for crisis communication.

Research the ethical responsibilities of opinion leaders in crisis communication considering issues like misinformation, biases, and accountability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Dear Respondent,

My name is Bernard Omollo Onyango a student at Daystar University carrying out a research study on the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management: a case study of Kipeto energy, Kenya. This questionnaire will take a few minutes to complete. Any information shared is for academic purposes only. Your identity will remain anonymous, and you have the right to accept or decline to be part of the research study. Your honest opinion on the questions will be highly appreciated. Please kindly complete the questionnaire as per the instructions given. If you are not willing to participate in the research process kindly ignore this letter but if you are willing to participate in the research process kindly sign below:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

Appendix B: Research Questionnaire

My name is Bernard Omollo Onyango, a Master of Arts in Communication majoring in Corporate Communication at Daystar University. Kindly fill out the questionnaire as accurately as possible. All information given will be for academic purposes only and confidentiality will be maintained. Thank you.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND

- 1. Gender of respondent Male Female
- 2. Age of respondent 18-28 29-39 40-50
 51-60 61 and above
- 3. Position in the organization
 Social community committee Top Management Middle Management
 Supervisory Non-Management
- 4. Highest level of education
 Primary Level Secondary level
 College Level University Level
 Any other (Specify)
- 5. Number of years engaged at Kipeto Energy
 Below a year between 1 and 2 years between 3 and 4 years
 Between 5 and 6 years Seven years and above
- 6. Do you consider yourself an opinion leader in relation to your engagement at Kipeto Energy.
 Yes No
 Explain your response.

7. Are you aware of crisis communication management?
 Yes No
8. Have you been engaged in addressing any crisis communication in your engagement at Kipeto Energy?
 Yes No
9. To what extent do you think your organization has employed opinion leaders in its operations? Tick as appropriate using the following Likert scale of 1-5 where: 1= No Extent; 2= Little Extent; 3= Moderate Extent; 4= Great Extent; 5=Very Great Extent.

	Opinion leaders' engagement at Kipeto Energy	Respondents Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The organization uses opinion leaders to deliver relevant messages to stakeholders					
2	The organization employs opinion leaders who are trusted areas to communicate a message					
3	Opinion leaders are given access to the organizations leadership to contribute to activities affecting the environments, internal and external					
4	The organization actively seeks opinion leaders who are trustworthy to engage in promotions/campaigns.					
5	The organization offers training to opinion leaders so that they communicate the right message					
6	Opinion leaders are made aware of information that is not readily available to the public					
7	The organization has a pool of opinion leaders suitable to address areas when need arises					

10. Has the efforts to incorporate opinion leaders improved the image of the organization in the community?
 Explain.....

11. Have opinion leaders played a role in averting crisis that the organization was not aware of?
 Explain.....

-
12. To what extent do you think your organization has communication strategies for managing crisis? Tick as appropriate using the following Likert scale of 1-5 where: 1= No Extent; 2= Little Extent; 3= Moderate Extent; 4= Great Extent; 5=Very Great Extent.

	Crisis communication management	Respondents Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
	Awareness					
1	The organization has a policy in place for addressing crisis Communication when a crisis arises					
2	Ad-hoc meetings are held to address crisis Communication when crises arise.					
3	There are particular people in the organization tasked with identifying areas of potential crisis in relation to the organization and its operations.					
5	Crisis communication management is addressed only when crisis arise					
6	The organization has a specified budget to address c crisis communication management					
7	The organization has regular meeting s to address management of crisis its.					
8	The organization keeps track of all past crisis Communication management interventions.					
9	The organization uses successful crisis communication interventions that other organizations have employed.					
10	There are crisis Communication management training programs that are carried out at regular intervals					

13. Which is the most common source of crisis for your organizations?
 Explain.....

14. To what extent do you think the impact of opinion leaders has had in crisis communication management at Kipeto Energy? Tick as appropriate using the following Likert scale of 1-5 where: 1= No Extent; 2= Little Extent; 3= Moderate Extent; 4= Great Extent; 5=Very Great Extent.

	Impact of opinion leaders on crisis communication management	Respondents Ratings				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Opinion leaders have influenced the public perception about the organization					
2	Opinion leaders have played a critical role in bridging the gap the community and the organization during crisis.					
3	The organization has on occasions used the wrong opinion leaders during which prolonged the crisis .					
4	There has been no significant change when opinion leaders are employed					
5	During crisis communication, the opinion leaders are the face of the organization.					
6	Opinion leaders have contributed to reducing misinformation during a crisis					
7	Opinion leaders contribute to improved teamwork during crisis management					
8	The image of the organization is improved after opinion leaders are engaged during crisis management					
9	Customers receive improved service after opinion leaders communicate their grievances to the organization after a crisis					
10	There is increased trust between the organization and the community after a crisis has been resolved through crisis communication management initiatives.					

15. Do you foresee a greater or lesser role for opinion leaders in crisis communication management?
 Explain.....

Thank You

Appendix C: Confidentiality And Non-Disclosure Agreements

CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

between

KIPETO ENERGY PLC

and

BERNARD OMOLLO ONYANGO
Daystar University Student Adm
No: 17-0320

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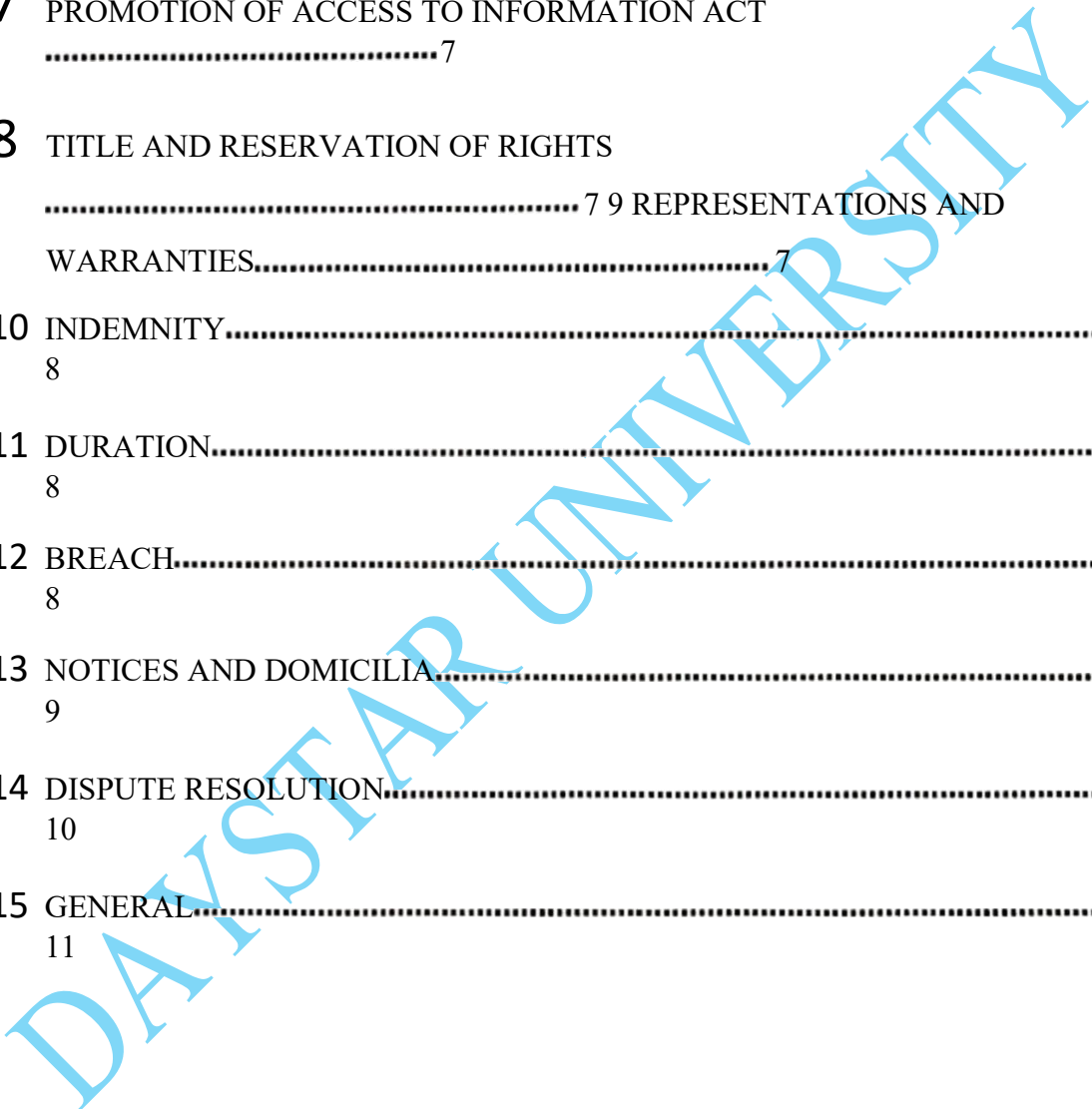
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CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT .
("Agreement")

This Agreement is made and entered into between -

Kipeto Energy PLC, a company duly registered and incorporated under the laws of Kenya and carrying on business at 2nd Floor of The Pavilion, Lower Kabete Road — Westlands, P.O Box 13492-00800, Nairobi, Kenya (hereinafter "Kipeto"); and

Benard Omollo Omyango a student at Daystar University registered and incorporated under the laws of Kenya and carrying on business at Daystar University Nairobi Campus P.O. Box 44400-00100- (hereinafter ^M).

DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY

Appendix D: Recitals

- A. The Parties wish to enter into discussions with each other whereby they will disclose to each other Confidential Information, which is of a proprietary, secret and confidential nature and which both Parties require to be kept confidential.
- B. The Parties wish to record the terms and conditions upon which they are prepared to disclose such Confidential Information to each other.

The Parties agree as set out below:

1 DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

1.1 Definitions

In this Agreement and the Recitals, unless clearly inconsistent with or otherwise indicated by the context -

1.1.1 "Affiliate" means any business entity which controls, is controlled by or is under common control of a Party and, for the purposes of this definition, a business entity shall be deemed to "control" another business entity if it owns, directly or indirectly, more than 50% (fifty per

cent) of the voting securities or capital stock of such business entity or any other comparable equity or ownership interest with respect to a business entity other than a corporation;

1.1.2 "Agreement" means this confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement;

1.1.3 "Business Day" means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday in the Republic of Kenya;

1.1.4 "Group" means, where applicable and relevant, a Party and its Affiliates;

1.1.5 "Confidential Information" means any information and data, which, by its nature and/or content, is identifiable as confidential and/or

proprietary to the Disclosing Party or its Affiliates and which is disclosed (whether before or after the Date of Signature) under and/or pursuant to the Permitted Purpose or otherwise acquired by the Receiving Party from the Disclosing Party, whether such information is formally designated as confidential or not, and whether communicated orally or in writing including director identification documents and audited financial statements;

1.1.6 "Date of Signature" means the day when the last Party signs this Agreement;

1.1.7 "Disclosing Party" means the Party disclosing Confidential Information;

1.1.8 "Parties" means Kipeto Energy PLC and Benard Omollo Onyango;

1.1.9 "Permitted Purpose" means the receipt, analysis and consideration of the Confidential Information with the exclusive purpose to investigate a possible business relationship between the Parties; and

1.1.10 "Receiving Party" means the Party receiving Confidential Information.

1.2 Interpretation

In this Agreement and the recitals, unless clearly inconsistent with or otherwise indicated by the context —

1.2.1 any reference to the singular includes the plural and conversely;

1.2.2 any reference to a gender includes all genders;

1.2.3 any reference to a person shall include an individual, a body corporate, government or governmental subdivision or agency, estate, trust, partnership or unincorporated association or any other legal or commercial entity or undertaking;

1.2.4 where a word or phrase is defined, its other grammatical forms have a corresponding meaning;

1.2.5 meanings ascribed to defined words and expressions in clause 1.1 above, shall impose substantive obligations on the Parties;

1.2.6 the clause headings have been inserted for convenience only and shall not be taken into account in the construction or interpretation of any of the provisions to which they relate. The clause headings are for descriptive purposes only and shall not in any way limit or amplify the terms of this Agreement; and

1.2.7 the use of the word "including" shall mean "including without limitation or prejudice to the generality of any description, definition, term or phrase preceding that word", and the word "include" and its derivatives shall be construed accordingly,

2 CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKINGS

2.1 The Parties acknowledge and agree that the Confidential Information is a valuable, special and unique asset proprietary to the Disclosing Party which, if certain parts of the information are disclosed, would be likely to cause irreparable loss, harm and damage to the commercial or financial interests of the Disclosing Party and/or could reasonably be expected to put the Disclosing Party at a disadvantage in contractual or other negotiations and/or prejudice the Disclosing Party in commercial competition.

2.2 The Parties agree that they will not, during the course of their association with each other, or thereafter, disclose the Confidential Information to any third party for any reason or purpose whatsoever without the prior written consent of the Disclosing Party, save in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.

2.3 The Receiving Party agrees and undertakes in favour of the Disclosing Party -

2.3.1 to maintain the Confidential Information secret and to use it only for the Permitted Purpose;

- 2.3.2 not to use the Confidential Information for the benefit of itself or any member of its Group;
- 2.3.3 not to utilise, divulge, publish, employ, apply, exploit or in any other manner whatsoever use the Confidential Information for any purpose whatsoever, other than for the Permitted Purpose, except with the prior written consent of the Disclosing Party;
- 2.3.4 not to copy, reproduce or reduce to writing any parts of the Confidential Information, except with the prior written consent of the Disclosing Party;
- 2.3.5 to keep the Confidential Information and any such copies or reproductions secure and in such a way so as to prevent (i) unauthorised access by any third party; and/or (ii) any loss, damage to or destruction of the Confidential Information;
- 2.3.6 not to adapt, alter, modify or change any of the Confidential Information in any manner whatsoever; and
- 2.3.7 to inform the Disclosing Party' as soon as reasonably possible after becoming aware that the Confidential Information has been disclosed to any unauthorised third party.
- 2.4 The Disclosing Party warrants that it is authorized in terms of applicable law to provide the Confidential Information to the Receiving Party and that where legally required, the necessary' consent has been obtained from the data subject(s) in question.

3 EXCLUDED INFORMATION

The obligations of the Parties pursuant to the provisions of this Agreement shall not apply to any information that -

- 3.1 is or becomes publicly known, otherwise than pursuant to a breach of this Agreement.

- 3.2 is already known by the Receiving Party.
- 3.3 is developed independently of the Disclosing Party by the Receiving Party without relying on or referring In any way to information disclosed by the Disclosing Party.
- 3.4 is disclosed by the Receiving Party to satisfy the order of a court of competent jurisdiction or to comply with the provisions of any law or regulation in force from time to time; provided that in these circumstances, the Receiving Party
- shall advise the Disclosing Party in writing prior to such disclosure to enable the Disclosing Party to take whatever steps it deems necessary to protect its interests in this regard; provided further that the Receiving Party will disclose only that portion of the information which it is legally required to disclose, and the Receiving Party' will use its reasonable endeavours to protect the confidentiality of such information to the widest extent possible in the circumstances;
- 3.5 is disclosed to a third party pursuant to the prior written authorisation from the Disclosing Party; and
- 3.6 is received from a third party in circumstances that do not result in a breach of the provisions of this Agreement.

4 PERMITTED DISCLOSURES

The Receiving Parti may disclose the Confidential Information to its directors, officers, employees and professional advisors (and those of its Group), but then only on a strictly need-to-know basis, and futher provided that the Receiving Party takes whatever steps are necessary to procure that such directors, officers, employees and professional advisors agree to abide by the terms of this Agreement to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of the Confidential Information by them to third parties, regardless of whether such director, officer, employee or professional advisor ceases or has ceased to be a director, officer, employee or professional advisor of the Receiving Party.

5 RETURN OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Disclosing Party may, at any time, request the Receiving Party to return any material containing, pertaining to or relating to the Confidential Information disclosed pursuant to the terms of this Agreement and may, in addition, request the Receiving Party to furnish a written statement to the effect that, upon such return, the Receiving Party has not retained in its possession, or under its control, either directly or indirectly, any such material.
- 5.2 As an alternative to the return of the material contemplated in clause 5.1 above, the Receiving Party shall, at the instance of the Disclosing Party, destroy such material and furnish the Disclosing Party with a written statement to the effect that all such material has been destroyed.
- 5.3 The Receiving Party shall comply with a request, in terms of this clause 5, within 5 (five) days of receipt of such a request.

6 STANDARD OF CARE

The Parties agree that they shall protect the Confidential Information disclosed pursuant to the provisions of this Agreement using the same standard of care that each Party applies to its own proprietary, secret or confidential information and that the Confidential Information shall be stored and handled in such a way as to prevent any unauthorised disclosure thereof.

7 TITLE AND RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

- 7.1 All Confidential Information disclosed by the Disclosing Party to the Receiving Party is acknowledged by the Receiving Party to be confidential and proprietary' to the Disclosing Party and not to confer any rights of whatever nature in such information to the Receiving Party.
- 7.2 The Disclosing Party reserves all rights in the Confidential Information. In particular, no licence is hereby granted, directly or indirectly, under any discovery, copyright or other industrial proprietary right now or in the

future held, made, obtained or licensable by the Disclosing Party to the Receiving Party.

8 REPRESENTATIONS AND WARRANTIES

8.1 Each Party represents and warrants that it has the authority necessary to enter into this Agreement and to do all things necessary to procure the fulfilment of its obligations in terms of this Agreement.

8.2 The Disclosing Party warrants that the disclosure of the Confidential Information to the Receiving Party -

8.2.1 will not result in a breach of any other agreement to which it is a party; and

8.2.2 will not, to the best of its knowledge and belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

9 INDEMNITY

The Receiving Party indemnifies and holds the Disclosing Party harmless against any loss, action, claim, harm, damage, or other liability of whatever nature, suffered by the Disclosing Party pursuant to a breach by the Receiving Party of the provisions of this Agreement.

10 DURATION

This Agreement shall be of full force and effect from the Date of Signature and endure until expiry of a period of 48 (forty eight) months thereafter.

11 BREACH

11.1 The Receiving Party acknowledges that monetary damages may not be a sufficient remedy for unauthorised disclosure of the Confidential Information and that the Disclosing Party shall be entitled, without waiving other rights or remedies in law or in terms of this Agreement, to

such interdictory relief as may be deemed proper by a court of competent jurisdiction.

11.2 The Disclosing Party shall furthermore be entitled to claim specific performance by the Receiving Party of all of the Receiving Party's obligations, whether or not the due date for performance shall have arrived, in either event without prejudice to the Disclosing Party's rights to claim damages, as provided for in this Agreement. The foregoing is without prejudice to such other rights as the Disclosing Party may have in law.NFnGY

11.3 The Receiving Party undertakes to pay all the legal costs of the Disclosing Party, together with VAT thereon, should the Disclosing Party successfully enforce any of its rights in terms of this clause 11 and/or otherwise.

12 NOTICES

12.1 Any notices arising out of or required in connection with this Agreement, its breach, or termination shall be in English and shall be delivered by hand, recognised international courier, by email or by facimile transmission to the addresses set out in the Parties section below.

12.1.1 in the case of Kipeto Energy PLC at:

Address: 2nd Floor, The Pavilion
Lower Kabete Road, Westlands
P.O. Box 13492-0080
Nairobi, Kenya

Attention: Stefan Van Niekerk

Email: Stefan.VN@kipetoenergy.co.ke

12.1.2 in the case of Benard Omollo Onyango at:

Address: Daystar University, Nairobi Campus
P.O. Box 4400-00100

Attention: Stefan Van Niekerk
Stefan.VN@kipetoenergy.co.ke

Email: benardomolloonyango@gmail.com

or at such address which the Party concerned may notify the other in writing.

ENERGY

12.2 Any notice given in terms of this Agreement shall be in writing and shall (i) if delivered by hand, be deemed to have been duly received by the addressee on the date of delivery; and (ii) if delivered by recognised international courier service, be deemed to have been received by the addressee on the first Business Day following the date of such delivery by the courier service concerned.

12.3 Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this Agreement, a written notice or communication actually received by a Party from the other shall be adequate written notice or communication to such Party.

13 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

13.1 Any dispute arising under this Agreement shall, upon the written request of either Party, immediately be referred to a person nominated by Kipeto Energy PLC and Benard Omollo Onyango respective board of directors for resolution. Such persons shall meet within 5 (five) Business Days of the date of such request and attempt to negotiate a resolution of the dispute ("Amicable Settlement").

13.2 If the Parties are unable to reach Amicable Settlement, for any reason whatsoever within 30 (thirty) Business Days after a Party's written request for a meeting was made, then either Party may request the other Party to submit the dispute to binding arbitration.

13.3 Binding arbitration:

13.3.1 the arbitration shall be held before a single arbitrator.

13.3.2 the Parties shall mutually agree on an arbitrator within 5 (five) Business Days. Should the arbitrator be unable to accept the invitation to act as arbitrator, the Parties may, within a further 5 (five) Business

Day period, agree on another arbitrator.

13.3.3 if the Parties are unable to agree on an arbitrator within 5 (five) Business Days, the arbitrator shall be appointed in accordance with the then-existing Rules of Arbitration of the London Court of International Arbitration ("LCIA").

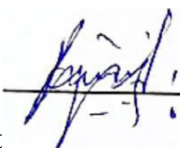
ENERGY

Signed at _____ on this the _____ day of _____ 2021

For: Kipeto Energy PLC


Duly Authorised Name:

Designation:

Signed at  on this the _____ day of _____ 2021

_____ For: Benard Omollo Onyango

Duly Authorised

Name: 

Designation:

RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

Research Project (The impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management,
A case study of Kipeto Energy, Kenya)

Principle Investigator: Bernad Onyango

Institution: Daystar University Course: MA In corporate Communication Contacts:
0721334597 E-mail: _____benardomolloonyango@gmail.com

Name of Academic Supervisor: Robert Aswani and Lydia Radoli Contacts of
Academic Supervisor: 0722973852, 0759121707

Study Start Date: _____19/09/2023_____ Study End Date: _____22/09/2023

Data Collection Start Date: 19/09/2023 Data Collection End Date: 22/09/2023

1st Investigator _____**Bernard Omollo Onyango**_____

2nd Investigator _____

3rd Investigator _____

1. Project Description:

Firms are aware of the negative impact terrible and ineffective leaders have on the organizations image, but few know how to address the problem Organizations have various strategies to achieving the organizational objectives; yet interventions initiated by organizations are not successful considering. About sixty to ninety percent of all strategies fail at implementation (Candido & Santos, 2019). This implies having a crisis communication management strategy in place does not mean it will be successful. A company's use of opinion leaders in crisis communication is an attempt to persuade consumers that the issue is less serious than it appears, and thereby avoid

negative opinions being formed against the company's brand (Falkheitner, 2008; Drupsteen & Ilasle, 2014). A study on leadership in crisis concluded that leadership is crucial in crisis management because they motivate their teams to act according to the crisis management plan until the matter is sufficiently resolved (Dimitrovska, Stamenkova, & Stosic, 2023).

Kipeteo Energy was singled out of the study because it has experienced a lot of challenges from its inception stage. It has also used consultant companies as opinion leaders who would help the organization to address its crisis communication management strategy.

2. Method of Data Collection

The study will use descriptive research to establish the observed relationship between the variables under study, Data will be collected using Questionnaires.

3. Is The Research Virtual or Physical?

The research will be Physically.

4. What are the Objectives of the Study?

1. To identify the role of opinion leaders at Kipeteo Energy in crisis communication management.

2. To identify other Crisis communication management strategies employed at Kipeteo Energy

3. To assess the impact of opinion leaders in managing crisis communication at Kipeteo Energy.

5. What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management, with A case study of Kipeto energy, Kenya.

6. Do individuals have to take part?

Participation in this study will be voluntary and respondent will not be penalized if they decide you withdraw from the study. If an individual decides to withdraw, he/she will not have to give any reason. All answers given by the respondents will be kept confidential and anonymous only being used for academic purposes.

7. What will happen if they take part?

Individuals will be asked to complete a questionnaire which we estimate will take you about 10 minutes to be filled, the researcher will make sure respondents are protected and nothing harmful happens to them.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in this study?

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause any disadvantages but may cause some discomfort due to the nature of the questions.

9. What are the benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the research, it is hoped that this work will have a beneficial impact on the individual and the company to understand the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management.

10. What if something goes wrong during the study period?

If an individual have any complaints about the project in the first instance he/she can consult any member of the research team and speak to them) about their issue.

11. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that will be collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Respondents will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications.

12. How will data be stored and handled?

Any data collected in the questionnaire will be stored and handled personally by the lead research investigator. After the questionnaire being handled to the researcher, all questionnaires will be kept in a brown enveloped well sealed and only the lead research will be in charge of the brown envelop. Data collected may be shared in an anonymized form to allow reuse by the research team and other third parties. These anonymized data will not allow any individuals or their institutions to be identified or identifiable.

13. Will the Respondent be recorded?

Respondents will not be recorded in any way other than their input to the questionnaire.

14. What type of information will be sought from Respondents and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The questionnaire will ask respondents about their opinions on the impact of opinion leaders in crisis communication management, their views and experience are just what the project is interested in exploring.

15. What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research will be published. Respondents will not be identified in any report or publication.

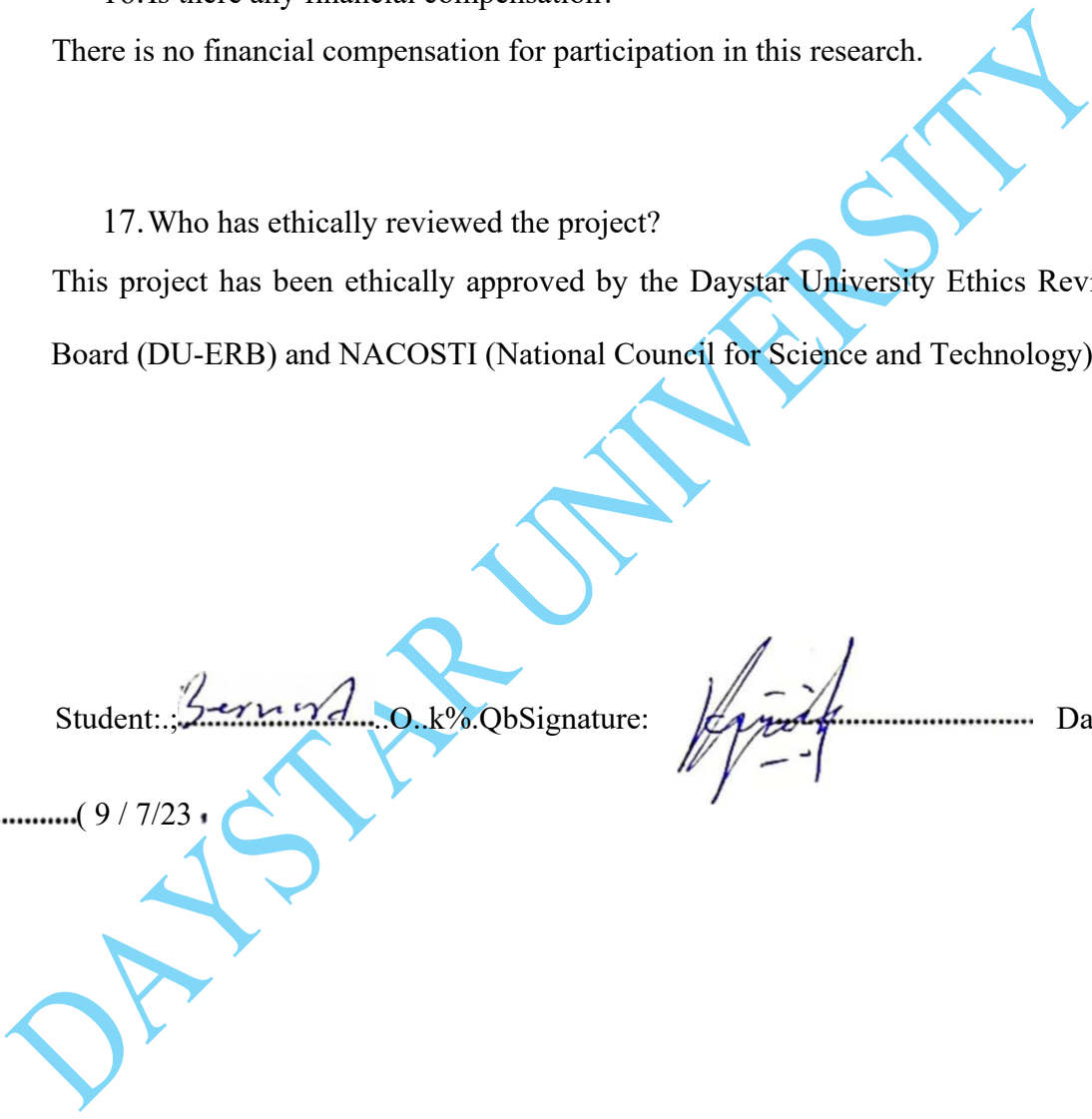
16. Is there any financial compensation?

There is no financial compensation for participation in this research.

17. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved by the Daystar University Ethics Review Board (DU-ERB) and NACOSTI (National Council for Science and Technology).

Student: Bernard O. Okob Signature:  Date:(9 / 7/23 ,



Appendix E: Ethical Clearance

VERDICT: APPROVED WITH COMMENTS

Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (DU-ISERC)

Our Ref: **DU-ISERC/ 12/06/2023/000875**Date: 12th June 2023

To Bernard Omollo Onyango

Dear Bernard,

IMPACT OF OPINION LEADERS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF KIPETO ENERGY, KENYA

Reference is made to your ISERC application reference No. **260523-02** dated **26th May 2023** in which you requested for ethical approval of your proposal by Daystar University Ethics Review Board. We are pleased to inform you that ethical review has been done and the verdict is to **Revise, to the satisfaction of the Supervisors and then proceed to the next stage.** As guidance, ensure that the attached comments are addressed. Please be advised that it is an offence to proceed to collect data without addressing the concerns of Ethics Review board. Your application approval number is **DU-ISERC-000875**. The approval period for the research is **between 12th June 2023 to 11th June 2024** after which the ethical approval lapses. Should you wish to continue with the research after the lapse you will be required to apply for an extension from DU-ERB at half the review charges.

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 a signed one-page executive summary report and a closure report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Daystar University Ethics Review Board via email [duerb@daystar.ac.ke].

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 other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Susan Muriungi PhD
Ag. Chair, Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee

Encl. Review Report



"...until the day dawn and the
DAYSTAR arise in your hearts"
2 Peter 1:19 KJV

Appendix H: Plagiarism Report

Submission date: 18-Oct-2023 01:35PM (UTC+0300)

Submission ID: 2199559427

File name: Benard_Omollo_Thesis.docx
(209.86K)

Word count: 20919

Character count: 112699

Benard Onyango Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

5%	4%	1%	3%
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