

**COMMUNICATING CRISIS PREPAREDNESS: A CASE STUDY OF ELECTRICITY
COMPANY OF GHANA**

BY

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**A LONG ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is as a result of my own research conducted at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. All references to other people's work have been properly acknowledged. The work was supervised by Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene.

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Dr. Margaret I. Amoakohene

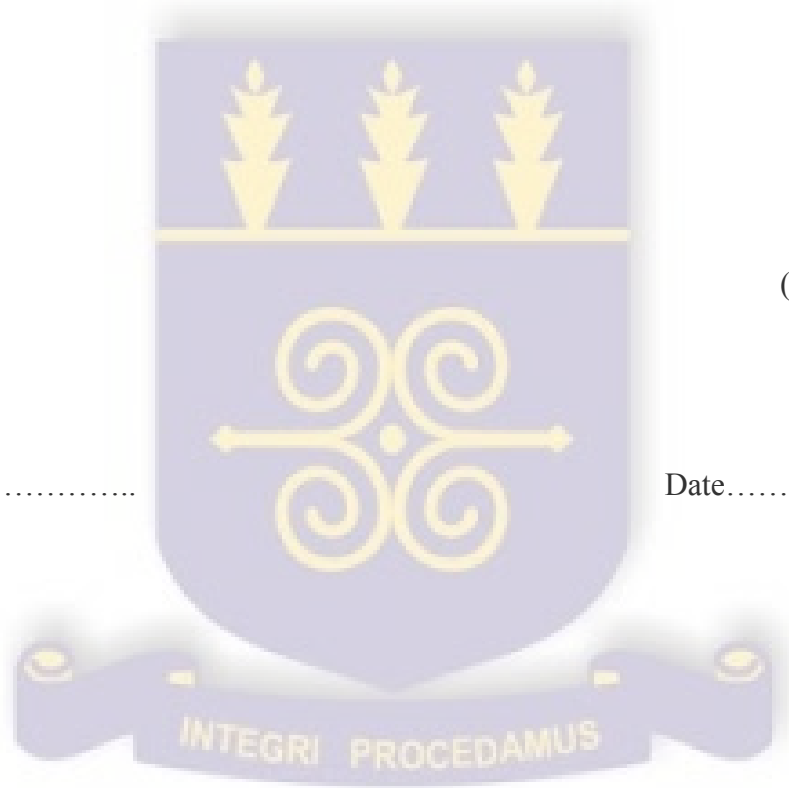
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this long essay to the Almighty God, to my husband Mr. Peter Kofi Asamoah, my father Mr. Stephen Bosumtwi and to all lecturers and students of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.



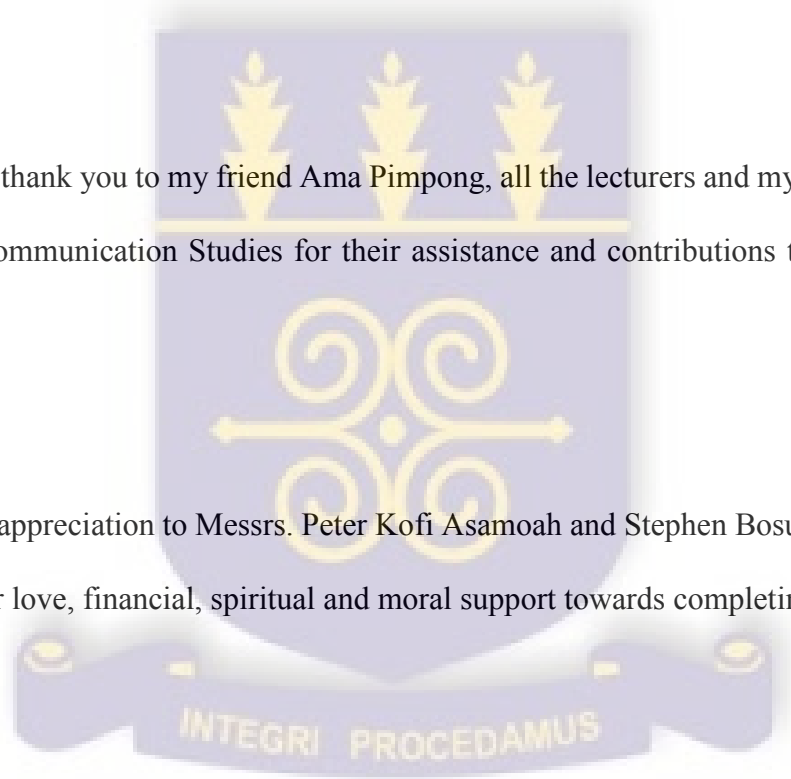
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Abstract

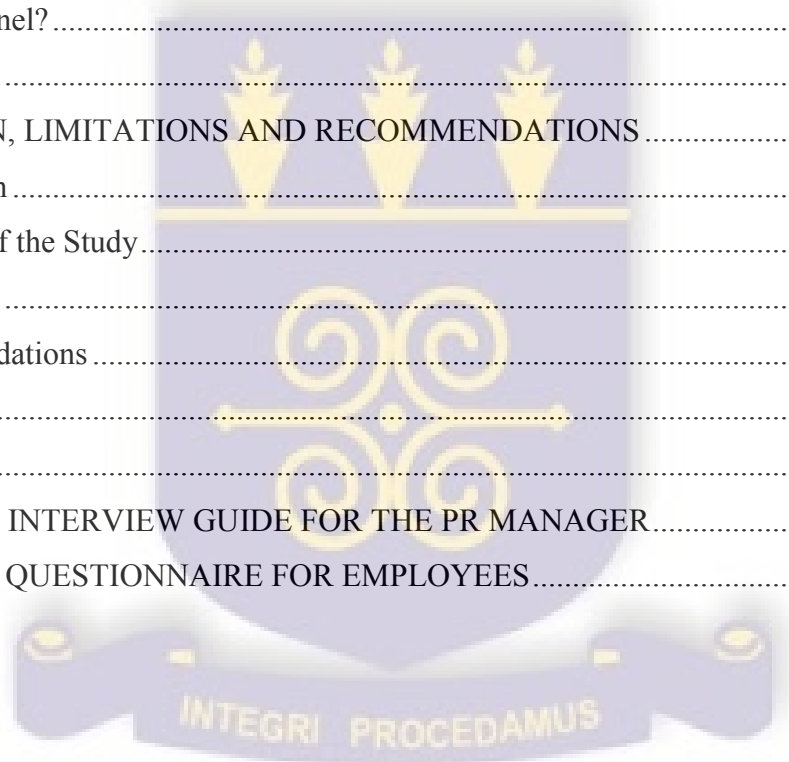
This study examined the internal communication strategies and channels used by Electricity Company of Ghana Limited (ECG) in its preparations towards crises. It also studied ECG's employees' perceptions of those channels used in communicating crisis-related information to them. An in-depth interview was conducted with the ECG Public Relations Manager and results of the responses were analyzed using Morgan's ethnography summary. In addition, a survey was conducted on 100 employees from five ECG Regions and the results analyzed in frequencies and tables. This study was premised on the systems theory. The findings revealed that ECG's crisis preparedness communication strategy involved series of organizational meetings with employees at the head, regional and district offices. The strategy had been integrated into the organizational culture where existing communication channels and processes were adopted in communicating its preparedness towards future crisis. It was also observed that durbar remained employees' most effective channel; though telephone calls, departmental meeting, social media and company website were also considered effective channels of communicating crisis-related information. In addition, social media was most preferred because communication through it is prompt, consistent, easily accessible and it enhances effective communication. The study recommended that more efforts be geared towards making the crisis preparedness information readily available and accessible to all employees.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

An organization experiences crises when a negative event occurs with unexpected intensity, surprising the stakeholders and also requiring an immediate response (Coombs, 2007). Many organizations in the world have experienced different types of crises such as; the BP oil rig explosion which resulted in millions of gallons of oil spilt in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010; the collapse of the Melcom building in Achimota, Ghana; Johnson & Johnson and Tylenol product tampering and recently, the nationwide energy crisis of ECG in Ghana. According to Hargis and Watt (2010), crises can be experienced at any stage of an organization's life cycle because risks and hazards are diverse (Sutton & Tierney, 2006:31). The organization's ability to identify potential crises will enable it make good initiatives to manage the threats associated with crises; such as "public safety, financial loss and reputational loss" (www.instituteforpr, 2014).

Boins and Sundelius (2005) have defined a crisis as a "specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization's high priority goals". Crisis needs to be prevented because it costs money, necessitating organizations to prepare (put in measures which will best protect capital, stakeholders and reputation) to respond effectively when crisis sets in. Organizations which do not prepare towards crisis are exposed to risks such as reputational damage, fire outbreaks, loss of human lives, technical failures etc. (Coombs, 2007). A Crisis Management Plan (CMP) is a reference tool which details important contact information, reminders of activities needed to be acted on, training and

crisis drills, communication planning and other strategic and tactical options (Handbook of Crisis communication, 2010). A crisis management plan helps to prepare an organization towards crisis (Johansen & Frandsen, 2012; Boz & Küçükaltan, 2013; Promsri, 2014, Coombs, 2012).

A crisis management plan according to Coombs (2007) consists of three phases: (1) pre-crisis, (2) crisis response, and (3) post-crisis. The pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparations against crisis. The crisis response phase is when management must actually respond to the crisis and the post-crisis phase looks for ways to improve on the crisis preparation against the next crisis. The pre-crisis stage is the most important of the crisis management phase because planning and preparation are the fundamentals for an organization to be able to act quickly as well as put together more useful decisions (Selart, Johansen and Nesse; 2012). “Communication is the critical component of crisis management” (Handbook of Crisis Handbook of Crisis Communication (2010:17).

Part of the organization’s pre-crisis management practices is to communicate internally its crisis management plan and its expectations of employee behavior during crisis (Coombs 2012; Lando 2014). Internal crisis communication is important because crisis is not handled by management alone but with employees. Also, it helps employees appreciate the possibility of managing crises and the procedures required to do so. Internal communication builds trust between management and employees and it also strengthens organizational effectiveness (Welch, 2012). Employees are assured that management has their interest at heart, gain confidence in the organization, share in the organization’s identity, execute their duties effectively and achieve their organizational objectives during a crisis if they are aware of the organization’s plans towards crises.

A good communication relationship between management and employees before a crisis is likely to result in good employee communicative action during crisis. Selart et al. (2012:100-101), have confirmed that “the way leadership is handling the pre-crisis phase most often has an impact on its relationship with the employees”. This implies that employees play both receiver and sender roles during crises and are likely to act as advocates for their organization and not to exaggerate managements’ responsibility by leaking secret information about the organization or distance themselves from the organization and refuse to be its advocate (Ulmer, 2001). This agrees with Fearn-Banks (2007:17) assertion that “strong people-centered corporate culture, rather than a profit-centered one, is also an effective crisis prevention tool”.

Information flows from the sender to the receiver through communication channels. The use of effective channels result in organizational efficiency because it prevents miscommunication and unsatisfied behavior among employees in the work place. In order to attain the organization’s communication objectives, it is vital management knows employees’ views and preferences for its internal communication channels. In bridging that gap, the focus lies in developing a crisis communication strategy.

The presence of communication strategies will guide the organization to communicate effectively to its intended audiences by using effective communication channels and well developed messages. The primary aim of any communication strategy is for the message to be delivered and be understood by its intended audience. Communication strategies will guide the organization to use effective communication channels and well developed messages to communicate with its intended audiences successfully. During crisis, employees are probably the last to receive information from management because that is when management works excessively to protect the

organization's reputation by engaging the external publics and the media. Internal communication strategy plays an important role in the crises preparedness process and must not be overlooked by crises managers so as to maintain consistent flow of information to all publics.

Crises are unforeseen events. Therefore an organization needs to prepare towards any potential event. The organization must establish an appropriate response plan, select the proper channels or mediums for information flow to protect the organization's reputation and its stakeholders. It is in this context that this study uses the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) as a case to examine the internal communication strategies and channels used in communicating crises in the pre-crisis phase. Also, to find out employees perceptions of those channels and whether they preferred others to the existing ones.

1.2 Profile of Institution

The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) is the major power distributor in Ghana. ECG makes it possible for an estimated 45-47% of Ghanaians, including 15-17 % of the rural population, to have access to grid electricity (ISSER, 2005). ECG is a limited liability Company wholly owned by the Government of Ghana and operating under the Ministry of Energy (ME) since February, 1997 (www.ECGonline.info, 2015). Operationally, ECG buys energy supply in bulk from suppliers (such as Volta River Authority and other Independent Power Producers (IPPs) like Sun Asogli, Bui etc.) and distributes to its customers.

ECG's mission is "to provide quality, reliable and safe electricity services to support the economic growth and development of Ghana" (www.ECGonline.info, 2015). As part of the organization's

functions, it is responsible for distributing electricity through well maintained networks for efficiency. The organization's vision is "to be among the leading Electricity Distribution Companies in Africa by 2020" (www.ECGonline.info, 2015). Due to these operational activities, more technical than administrative staff have been employed by ECG to help achieve all the organization's objectives as stated above. These objectives could be achieved if ECG takes internal communication seriously.

1.3 Problem Statement

ECG operations involve a lot of risk: fire outages, financial loss, reputational loss, technical failures, loss of human lives etc. and this increases the crisis vulnerability of the organization. At the time of this study, ECG had encountered cash flow challenges resulting from huge debt (about GH¢ 1.2billion) owed by some of its customers and government agencies. ECG's situation was further aggravated by an energy crisis which eventually resulted in load shedding, lasting over three years.

This energy crisis posed the highest threat to the growth of Ghana's economy and affected individuals, industries and ECG as well. Energy tariffs went extremely high, the cedi depreciated and the nation recorded high inflation rates. Several businesses collapsed and many employees lost their jobs because of low productivity. Many Ghanaians were frustrated about the high cost of living resulting from this crises. Some physically attacked ECG offices and assaulted its employees whilst pressure groups, some celebrities and political parties also went on demonstration against ECG. All these threatened the sustainability and reputation of the organization. It became a huge and serious topical issue. The media reported that ECG was likely to undergo a concessionary sale

or partial privatization which might lead to diminishing conditions of service and redundancies (Graphic Online, 19th May, 2015).

When employees experience risky situations they make use of information from trusted sources. Nonetheless if ECG has a crisis management plan but does not communicate it effectively to its employees, it would be difficult for the employees to know their roles and act confidently towards the achievement of the organizational goals during crises. In order to manage rumors and information from unofficial sources, ECG must prepare its employees towards crisis management and the changes which may affect them when the company undergoes a concessionary sale.

Several literature reviewed indicated that organizational crisis can be evaded if organizations anticipate the possible crises which threaten their business continuity and have in place, crisis preparedness plans. Others confirmed that managers neglect management-employee communication during crisis and recommended it as a new research area (Lockwood, 2005; Promsri, 2014; Lando, 2014; Coombs, 2014; Heide & Simonsson, 2014; Johansen et al., 2012; Mazzei et al., 2012; Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). It is for this reason that this study focused on the internal crisis communication preparedness existing at ECG.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the internal communication strategies used by Electricity Company of Ghana for its crisis preparedness communication as entailed in its crisis management plan.
2. To know about the internal communication channels used by the Electricity Company of Ghana in preparing employees for crises.

3. To evaluate ECG employees' satisfaction with the channels used in communicating crises to them and identify their most preferred internal communication channel.

1.5 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above objectives, this study would be guided by the following research questions.

RQ1. How do ECG's crisis communication strategies adequately prepare its employees for crises?

RQ2. What channels do ECG use in communicating its crisis preparedness to its employees?

RQ3. Which communication channels do ECG employees perceive as effective?

RQ4. Which of the internal communication channels used by ECG employees is the most preferred channel?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to a deeper understanding and emphasis on the importance of internal crisis communication preparedness to organizations and open up further scholarly investigation on the subject within Africa (since most studies done have considered the western context). It will also contribute to scholarship on the crisis communication field.

In addition, the findings of this study will help ECG to build strong internal strategies for crisis communication management in order to better manage future crises from escalating into a nationwide crisis. Findings of this study will also encourage ECG to make crisis information easily accessible to all employees so that they can easily relate it to the organizational culture and perform productively towards their organizational goals. It will also highlight the importance of management-employee crisis communication preparedness before considering the external crisis

communication. Organizations in the energy sector can also apply the recommendations that stem from this study to improve their crisis resiliency.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

The following terms used in this research have been defined as follows:

- a. Employees: In this study, the word employee is used to refer to anyone who has been employed by the Electricity Company of Ghana as a permanent staff.
- b. Management: The decision making body of ECG which is in charge of operations, decision making and administration. It is also used interchangeably with top management to mean the same in this study.
- c. Internal Communication: This refers to the exchange of information between an organization or management and its internal stakeholders or employees. For the purpose of this study, Internal Communication has been used interchangeably with organizational communication.
- d. Crisis: It is any unpredictable event which threatens stakeholders' expectations and can fatally impact an organization's performance and cause negative outcomes.
- e. Preparedness: It involves psychologically rehearsing circumstances and providing the organization with systems and procedures so that they can react appropriately, sufficiently, and timely.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The organization of this study is in five separate chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction and a background of the study and focuses on internal communication; the need to develop

communicational strategies and effective use of communication channels to establish relationships with employees in order to attain high productivity in an organization. The problem statement, profile of the institution, significance of the study, objectives and research questions and key terms of the study is also captured in this first chapter.

Chapter two focuses on the conceptual framework and literature reviews related to the study; on crisis preparedness, crisis communication, internal communication strategies and channels. The theory used (Systems Theory) for the study is also explored.

The methodology used for this study is presented in chapter three. The chapter gives details of the sampling procedure, the sampling size, the population and respondent background, data collection process, data collection instrument and data analysis.

The findings of the study are presented in chapter four while chapter five discusses the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

1.9 Summary

The chapter looked at the concept of crisis, the importance of internal communication in pre-crisis stage and its impact on the organization ECG. The problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, and profile of ECG, significance of the study were all outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

The first part of this chapter explains the concepts: crisis, crisis management and organizational crisis preparedness, internal communication, communication strategy and communication channels. Then it goes further to explore the theory used in this study. The Systems Theory (ST) was used to identify the relationship between internal communication and a need for a functional system in an organization's preparedness for crisis. The subsequent part of this chapter discusses previously conducted studies that relates to the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This subsection explains the various concept and constructs that dominate the study.

2.1.1 Defining Crisis

Mitroff& Anagnos (2001:34–35) defines crisis as “an event that affects or has the potential to affect the whole of an organization. Thus, if something affects only a small, isolated part of an organization, it cannot be considered a crisis. In order for a major crisis to occur, it must exact a major toll on human lives, property, financial earnings, the reputation, and the general health and wellbeing of an organization”. An organization would be able to lessen the impact of crisis effectively when it develops plans towards handling potential crisis in case it occurs. (Herman, 1963; Coombs, 2009; Sellnow, 1999).

2.1.2 Defining Communication as a Prerequisite for Internal Communication and Organizational Crisis Preparedness.

Communication can be one-way transmission of message as per the Shannon-Weaver model (1949; cited in www.utwente.nl2010). Information is encoded by a source before delivering it through a chosen channel to an intended receiver who also decodes that information. Other versions of this model (SMCR) have provided a feedback point in the process from the receiver to the sender. This theory suggests that the receiver is able to understand the message provided that message is received. Internal communication has been defined as “the exchange of information and ideas within an organization” (Bovee and Thill, 2000:7). Although Welch and Jackson (2007:138) have defined internal communication from a stakeholder’s viewpoint as “the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within organizations”.

2.1.3 Conceptualizing Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is “the communication between the organization and its publics prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence” (Fearn-Banks, 1996:2). A crisis management plan actually involves initiating a learning attitude throughout the organization, getting acceptance for the work and doing the work together with others (McEntire, 2007). The Handbook of Crisis Communication (2012) has explained the type of communication which revolves around these preparedness activities (pre-crisis phase) towards crisis as crisis communication. This includes the stakeholders’ trainings, “collection and processing of information for crisis team decision making along with the creation and dissemination of crisis messages to people outside of the team” (The Handbook of Crisis Communication, 2012:20). “Effective crisis communication starts long before

a crisis hits an organization and should be a part of every organization's business and strategic plans" (Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger, 2007: 35).

2.1.4 Communication Strategy

A communication strategy is a plan that aims to shape the opinions of an organization's primary audience and influence a reputation to precede the corporate objectives and preserve the goodwill toward the brand (Ryerson, 2003). Development of internal communication strategies must consider the organizational culture to achieve those long term communication approach (Ryerson, 2003). Organizational culture spells out how employees are to behave (Abdull & Antony, 2012). The strategy must include a profile of the intended audience to develop suitable and effective messages and channels (Melcrum, 2004).

2.1.5 Internal Communication Channels

A medium through which messages are transmitted and received among participants involved in communication is known as a communication channel. Heyer (2003:133) argues that: "a medium of communication has an important influence in the dissemination of knowledge over space and over time and it becomes necessary to study its characteristics in order to appraise its influence in its cultural setting". The categories of channels used in various organizations are face to face interaction or interpersonal (e.g. speeches, team or departmental meetings, durbars or social events etc.), print (e.g. memos, letters, newsletters, notice board, annual reports etc.) and electronic (e.g. email, intranets, blogs, instant messaging systems etc.). Social media is a new electronic and web-based communication channel such as blogs, chat rooms, discussion forums, web sites, social

networks (e.g. MySpace). The written forms of the channel (print) are known as the formal methods and complement the face-to-face methods. Communication method is strictly hierarchical because information flows up and down through specific directions.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was on the premise of the Systems Theory, also known as General Systems Theory.

2.2.1 Systems Theory

The Systems Theory (ST) was proposed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (a biologist) in 1928 to study management and its organizational communication (Bertalanffy 1968). The ST explains communication events occurring within the organization (system) and its external environment. According to Bertalanffy (1968), a system has various parts and these parts take on their meaning from their functions in the system. A system was compared to a human body; which is a body with interdependent parts. The parts of the system work together through processes to achieve specific goals. The functioning of any of these units (subsystems) relies on others in the organization which results in their interdependency. The ST focuses on how interdependence generates and influences communication in groups to achieve a specific goal (www.utwente.nl, 2010). The interdependence in the group develops whenever people interact with each other. Public relations study has integrated studying a system as a human body because an organization and its various publics are perceived to consist of a system (Cutlip, Centre & Broom, 2000).

In relating this aspect of the theory to this study, the systems theory highlights on the importance of interdependence within an organization. The internal relationship that exists amongst ECG employees is focused on achieving the collective goal of the company (crisis prevention). For this

reason, junior staff depend on senior staff for instructions and relevant information which will help them in performing their prescribed roles effectively. The senior staff depends on management for general information (such as crisis policies and procedures) after management had formed those policies and communicated to them in order to act out their supervisory roles effectively. Collectively this interdependence results in the organization's ability or inability to manage crisis effectively. It is the existing communication relationship within ECG before a crisis that can determine its ability to manage future crisis effectively because employees would have already been prepared to act accordingly when the crisis occurs.

The ST study employs two general approaches: a cross sectional approach (a study of the interactions between two systems) and a developmental approach (the changes which occur in the system over time). Also subsystems can be studied as a complete functioning unit, a functionalist (assessing the roles of the subsystems within the larger system) and reductionist approach (studying the subsystems in the system). Therefore a system could be realized as the organization, a body and the different teams of employees who work within that organization as its parts. In relation to this study, ECG's crisis communication can be studied by investigating the type of communication which exists between the crisis team and all other employees; feedback received can determine if communication was successful or if it was a failure. The development approach will require a study of the types of anticipated crises or change management processes to determine its ability to function effectively during crisis.

The relationship existing between an organization and its employees could encounter pressures from its interactions with the internal environment of other social systems or the external non-

social environments (i.e. cultural, biological environment). Cutlip et al (2000:230) explained that “organizations-public systems must be able to adapt to their goals and relationships to accommodate change pressures from their complex and dynamic settings. These change pressures are from the environment and they can be in the form of information, energy and matter inputs”. This aspect of the theory suggests that changes occur in organizations to prevent older relationships from forming since they have a tendency to be dysfunctional. That is why organizations are expected to act and react in ways which are appropriate to the changes which they experience. If changes are not managed or responded to properly, the organization will degenerate and develop disorders. Crisis is a major pressure that results in changes or disorders in the organization. Therefore, the PR department is expected to anticipate and prepare its employees towards crisis to enable the organization function well.

According to Cutlip et al (2000:234), systems are categorized into two, “the relatively closed and relatively open systems because social systems cannot be completely closed or totally open”. Open systems utilize information exchange (input-throughput-output) with its environment to develop and succeed whilst closed systems do not permit much interactions (information flow from in or out) with its environment. All social systems need some degree of permeability to survive and adapt (Stacks, Hickson& Hill, 1991 as cited in www.utwente , 2010). Therefore a system always has some level of interactions with its environment. Public relations approach to the open systems places the profession in the role of bringing about changes in both environments and organizations. This aspect of the theory establishes the importance of two-way communication (process of sending information and receiving feedbacks) among employees as a necessity for the organization to operate effectively.

Bell and Bell (cited in Cutlip et al, 2000) have also explained that systems theory can be studied using the functional and functionary approaches. The functionary approach provides the public relations manager a technician role; to monitor the environment and bring about effective communication to avoid changes which will result in negative impact on the organization. This could be realized in how information about the organization flows to the environment and not the flow of information about the environment to the organization. In this approach, the public relations person is not involved in decision making or advisory roles (Cutlip et al, 2000).

On the other hand, the functional approach uses the open system approach and the public relations person is responsible for changing both the organization and its environment. The public relations office is empowered to participate in policy making especially in times of crisis; the public relations department has opportunity to control its domain. This role also helps in preventing a lot of potential crisis situations in the system (Cutlip et al, 2000). These two approaches highlight the primary communication roles in a social system. These roles also indicate what type of Public Relations (PR) is operated in a system.

In summary, the ST is significant to this study because it demonstrates that the act of communication is a PR role and effective PR within the organization results in the functioning of the whole system. The PR role includes managing internal relationships through effective communication with its publics as emphasized in the systems theory. Two-way communication has also been established by the theory as a system's prerequisite for survival. In addition, an organization which is unable to manage change is considered dysfunctional. The theory was to help establish if the PR department in ECG is performing its roles and internal relationships are managed to prepare the system for future crisis.

Relating the theory to the study, it can be explained that the extent to which an organization, which is made up of several branches or departments manages crises communication determines how far reaching its consequences will be on the organization. When crisis emerges, it is expected that there is a concerted effort from all branches and departments of the organization to mitigate its impact. Because the individual departments and branches of the organization are interdependent, it is important to tackle and prepare for crises so that when crises emerge in one department or branch, they do not extend to the rest. Also, when one department is under severe crises, their output reduces and that affects the entire operation of the organization. This is because the other departments who depend on the embattled department, might not function fully and effectively.

To this end, the theory helps in understanding the need to have a crisis team, which is composed of members and representatives from all the various stakeholder groups and departments in the organization. This leads to the formulation of a comprehensive and robust crisis strategy, which reflects the overall vision and mission of the organization.

2.3.0 Related Studies

This study reviewed scholarly works that have been conducted and discussed on crisis preparedness and internal communication.

2.3.1 Importance of Crisis Preparedness to Organizations and Its Impact on Employee Behavior

Boz and Küçükaltan (2013) qualitatively studied six big companies from different sectors in Turkey using a case study approach. The study's goal was to analyze and compare the crisis preparedness system, crisis experience and characteristics of the organizations. Findings were that

companies are better prepared when they have crisis preparedness plans. Also, companies who had experienced crisis before had better crisis preparedness systems even though their preparedness was not dependent on the population size of employees. Secondly, companies who were able to identify the potential crisis threats to their organization in their crisis preparedness phases enabled them to prepare adequately for future crisis. This supports the statement made by Kovoor et al (2000:44) that, the company will overcome or prevent crises by determining the causes of potential crises proactively, installing protective warning system and learning constantly from the experiences.

On the other hand, Fowler, Kling and Larson (2006) did a quantitative study of organizational preparedness for coping with major disaster. The study was to ascertain the readiness of organizations to successfully survive a serious potential crisis or disaster in their workplace in South-Western United States. One finding of the study was that top and middle level managers had a higher perception of preparedness than their employees. Also, companies with huge workforce exceeding 500 were better prepared for crisis. This study considered perceptions of all employee levels in the organizations rather than just the top level management because implications are that top level management are likely to provide bias information in support of their organization as discovered in a study conducted by Lando (2014) on the critical roles of crisis communication plan in corporations' crises preparedness and management.

Similar to findings from Fowler et al. (2006) study, Promsri (2014) discovered that top management had higher perception of crisis preparedness than the employees. Again, there was no relationship between work experience and employees' perception in response to crisis. The

objective of the quantitative study was to examine the Thai employees' perception towards organizational crisis preparedness in Thailand. Questionnaire was administered to 233 employees.

Also, Selart, Johansen and Nesse (2012) investigated how crisis preventive plans control employees' reaction to risk situations and welfare. The assumption was that leadership crisis preparation would lead to lower perceived risk among the employees and it would also lead to a higher degree of well-being. A survey was done on health and safety managers and employees from the five private (two) and public (three) sector organizations. Findings of the study supported the hypotheses tested; it was realized that employees' perception of risk at work was highly dependent on their awareness of the organizations' crisis preparedness. Most importantly, the study discovered that crisis preparedness resulted in well-developed crisis prevention plans. In addition, crisis preparedness has an outcome which extends further than the aim to prevent or accommodate crisis; it resulted in positive employee behavior, their general well-being and more positive effect on risk perception.

2.3.2 Influence of Internal Communication to Achieving Organizational Goals and Objectives

Abdullah and Antony (2012) surveyed employees of a leading five star hotel in Malaysia. The primary objective of the study was to examine the hotel's internal communication efforts and establish how the components of internal communication such as the structure, flow, content, climate and culture were being practiced successfully in the hotel. The study also sought to determine the channels, methods and types of internal contents used between management and employees in building a common understanding of the company's corporate goals and activities in the hotel. The systems theory and a model of employee relations were used. Findings confirmed

that internal communication is an introductory effort of organizational success and a means to achieving organizational objectives. It also established that the organization had high-performance strategic workplace communication system where communication flow between managerial and non-managerial employees was consistent; employees were informed of the events and occurrences in the organization. Employees were content with the processes of communication (i.e. bottom-up, top-down and horizontal communication approach) used in the hotel.

Another study by Kukule (2012) was a case study (survey and in-depth interview methods) to examine how inefficiency in communication can result in organizational crisis. Qualitatively, eight employees (from an unnamed organization) at three different levels of the organization were purposively sampled and interviewed. In agreement with Abdullah and Antony's (2012) study which discovered that effective internal communication brings about a functional organization; Kukule's study discovered that internal communication crisis had a direct relationship with organizational crisis. Employees were also of the view that organization's internal communication crisis came about as a result of irregular or asymmetrical formal internal communication, poor leadership, lack of values, a frail organizational culture and of a dynamic grapevine communication.

2.3.3 Internal Communication Strategies

Employee communicative actions refer to the ability of an organization to empower employees with information to enable them communicate positively to boost their company's reputation. Mazzei (2014) conducted a qualitative study of internal communication managers, scholars and experts from Italian and American companies. The study examined the implications of internal

communication strategies (managerial methods, tools, skills and abilities) on employee communicative actions and how those internal communication strategies could be improved on. Two hypotheses were used in studying the quality of relationships between employees and managers. The study confirmed that internal communication strategies help employees to be effective communicators. Secondly, their communicative actions can be realized through exploration, interpretation, sharing and acting. However, the communication managers must first create an environment where employees could easily express themselves.

Similarly, Ampofo-Bekoe (2014) interviewed employees from different departments in Tullow Oil Ghana and used media richness theory to discover the communication strategies and channels used in the organization to achieve effective internal communication. Another objective was to identify the impact of internal communication on the organization's productivity. Findings were; that employees were satisfied with the organization's internal communication strategy and chose the face-to-face channel over all the other internal communication channels used by their organization. Employees believed face-to-face was more efficient because it gave them an understanding of the brand image which helped them to project the company externally. However, employees also admitted the face-to-face channel was time consuming. One major communication channel challenge the study discovered was the regular breakdowns of the internet server.

2.3.4 Employees' Preference for Internal Communication Channels

Twum (2013) surveyed employees of Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited to identify the employees' preference of the organization's internal communication channels and whether the employees preferred the organization to introduce new channels which were not in use. The Media

Richness theory was used in the study. Participants from all the departments in Accra- Kumasi bottling plants were sampled by stratification and their responses collected using questionnaires. Twum found out that employees were content and preferred the use of the notice board better than all the other channels used by their organization in communicating with them. In addition to the findings, employees recommended both electronic and print formats to be used in communicating with them instead of using only print, electronic or face-to-face channels of communication.

Also, Arins (2013) evaluated the existing internal communication channels in GoldenMoments Limited, a multinational organization in the United Kingdom to discover employees' satisfaction with their organization's internal communication processes. Employees' level of satisfaction was measured by identifying the communication channels employees considered effective and the channels they preferred their organization to use in communicating with them. Theoretically, the study reviewed related studies on internal communication theory, methods, forms and channels of internal communication as well as challenges that affect the flow of communication in a multi-cultural environment. The survey constructed in Webropol, data collection and analysis tool discovered that the horizontal communication flow was highly used at GoldenMoments. Again, the most effective channel of communication was the personal meeting. Employees were satisfied with the existing internal channels of communication though they requested an improvement in the downward communication flow.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter describes the methodological approaches used in this study. It further explains the research design, sampling, sampling size, respondents' background and ECG's PR unit structure, data collection, data instrument and its administration as well as data analysis used in conducting this study.

3.1 Research Design

A case study approach was applied to this study using both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods. A mixed strand methodology was applied because it is essential in studying any phenomenon. In addition, Daymon and Holloway (2002) have emphasized that case study is different from other methodologies by intensive assessment of a single unit which is bounded by time and place.

Qualitatively, the study employed in-depth interview method to gather information regarding the crisis communication strategies and channels used in ECG's crisis preparedness communication. Wimmer & Dominick (2011) defines interview as a purposive conversation aimed at eliciting responses to a particular phenomenon. The qualitative study was convenient because it has a holistic focus and when applied; it tends "to be oriented to a wide range of interconnected activities, experiences, beliefs and values of people in terms of the context in which they are situated' (Daymond & Holloway, 2002:6). Again, it helps to attain a rich data.

Quantitatively, the survey method was used because it enabled the researcher to “gather a large amount of data with ease from a diversity of people, the researcher can examine many variables and have an array of statistics to analyze the data” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:185).

3.2 Sampling

This study employed a non-probability sampling method, specifically, the purposive sampling technique instead of the cluster sampling technique which the researcher preferred using but was challenged with. Purposive sampling is done on the basis of accessibility or purposeful judgement of the researcher. In purposeful selection, the logic is that the strategy for sampling must serve the purpose of the study (Patton, 2007). The units of analysis for this study were Electricity Company of Ghana employees in five ECG Regional offices and the Public Relations (PR) Manager in the head office. These five regional offices were chosen because of the nature of ECG’s operations and office locations. The ECG Regional offices were located in the capital towns of Ghana and averagely, all the categories of staff as well as all the (eight) departments were found in their Regional offices. Whereas, the district offices were scattered across the country, majority of the staff in the districts were of junior ranks and only about three major departments could be found in the district offices. These characteristics made it convenient sampling from the regional offices and not the districts.

Secondly, employees who had more than one year work experience were eligible to participate in this study. The reason being that crisis communication is an ongoing process and any employee who had worked in the company for a year would be informed about his organization’s crisis preparedness processes to be able to provide credible information and experiences towards this study.

The PR Manager who is located in the head office was purposively sampled for the interview because of his assigned roles. He was responsible for ECG's crisis management, represented the management of the organization and was well informed about the subject matter. This meant that interviewing more people in his role was not likely to show any significant differences in the results. Because of the subjective nature of non-probability sampling, the data attained with the study may not accurately represent the entire population therefore, findings from the study cannot be generalized to other cases.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample size of 100 employees formed the respondents for the survey, out of over 6,500 staffs that formed the population of ECG. Out of the nine ECG Regional offices, five regional offices (Accra East, Accra West, Tema, Western and Eastern) were purposively sampled for the survey. In each of the five regions, 20 employees were selected and the questionnaires administered to them as participants of this study. This was done to ensure that the information obtained is a true representation of employees' perceptions and experiences across the country. 100 questionnaires were administered to participants in all five regions. The researcher went to all five regional offices, sought permission officially from the Regional General Managers to administer the questionnaires to their employees. Then after, approached individuals within the office premises and sought their consent to participate in the survey. Due to the nature of ECG's operations, some of the questionnaires were completed and returned shortly after they were given out but many were retrieved the on subsequent days. Similarly, The PR Manager was presented an interview request letter and an interview appointment was scheduled to commence the process.

3.4 The Respondents' Background

At the time of this study, ECG had eight core departments headed by directors. Its offices were clustered into nine non-geographical regions and located in Ghana's district capitals. The regions were headed by Regional General Managers (RGM). The nine regions were further divided into 110 non-political districts and scattered in the catchment areas across Ghana. The district offices were headed by District Managers (DMs). The projects and head offices were situated in Accra. ECG had about 6,500 permanent employees working in all their offices across the country. Majority of these employees were field workers, they worked in smaller teams and belonged to the junior and senior staff categories. The senior staff is a supervisory rank and is responsible for assigning tasks and general information to the junior rank. The management staff categories included top managers, directors and assistant managers. The management staff is responsible for organizational decisions and policy making.

3.5 PR Unit Structure

Per the organization's organogram, the PR department was headed by the Director of Human Resource (HR) but in practice, the PR Manager (designated as the Divisional Manager) was the head of the PR unit and responsible for all PR activities in ECG. The PR department was not decentralized in the ECG regional offices. For that reason, the HR department assisted the PR department in the regional level. The PR manager was responsible for crisis communication, educating employees, writing memos and code of ethics and reported directly to the Managing Director (MD). Due to this role, he monitored issues and managed them to prevent the issues from developing into crisis. Aside the PR Manager are two Sectional Managers responsible for ECG's

internal and external public relations whilst the PR Officers were responsible for internal public relations at the regional level. They all reported to the PR Manager.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments and Administration

3.6.1 Interview

An 11 semi-structured question guide (Appendix A, page 56) was used in conducting an in-depth interview with ECG's Public Relations Manager (PRM) in his office. This was in response to research questions one and two; ECG's internal crisis communication strategies and effective channels used in conducting its crisis management practices with employees. The interview guide was used as a guideline to seek his views, experiences and facts on ECG's internal crisis preparedness communication practices and channels. In addition to that, related documents, articles, newsletters on ECG's crisis communication processes and channels, information on the notice boards relating to this study and non-verbal cues from the interviewee's reactions to questions were observed. This was done to ascertain the credibility of the information provided by the respondent and to serve as a rich data for the problem under study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Sanger, 1996). The researcher rephrased information to be confirmed by the interviewee when necessary to attain information accuracy. The interview lasted 45 minutes and was recorded on an audio tape recorder. A note pad and pen were also used for notes taking whilst the observation was done using an observation guide.

3.6.2 Survey

The researcher focused on research questions three and four using concepts from the system's theory and literature reviewed to design a questionnaire for the survey. The questionnaire was

made up of 14 questions (Appendix B page 57) and divided into three sections; the demographics and organizational factors of respondents, employees' most effective communication channel and most preferred channel. Most of the questions were closed ended and a couple was open-ended to give respondents an opportunity to express their opinion. A five point Likert scale style of questioning (Not Preferred being the least and "Highly Preferred" the highest option) was also used in giving employees freedom to choose from varied options to deduce their levels of agreement on the preference of a communication channel. This standardized style of questionnaire helped to reduce biases in the study. It took about five minutes to complete.

Letters were sent to the RGMs of all the ECG regions under study to seek permission to administer the questionnaires to participants. All of the regions but two (Western and Easter regions) provided an employee to assist the researcher in distributing and collecting the questionnaires from the selected respondents. Employees were likely to cooperate when they knew the study was in their own interest and was supported by management. Possibly that was why responses from those two regional offices were the least of the five regions surveyed. The questionnaire was tested using a pilot study in order to be certain the questions were clear and not confusing to respondents. After the pilot study, the researcher expanded some information in the questionnaire to include sources of crisis preparedness information and employee's participation in crisis training and drills to enhance understanding of the questions and enrich the data. The process of administering and collecting data lasted two working weeks. Out of the 100 administered questionnaires, 81 (representing 81%) were completed and returned.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Qualitative Data

More descriptively, a qualitative analysis is a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008:1). Analysis of the qualitative data was done adopting Morgan's (1988) ethnography summary from Mazzei (2013) study reviewed in chapter two. Content of the data was transcribed on a word document, grouped in order of their importance to the research questions, order of frequency (or occurrence) and the originality. Finding the best statements which relates to the research issue, each answer in the interview guide was examined and quotations were selected. These quotation were used in discussing findings of the study.

3.7.2 Quantitative Data

The survey data was analyzed using descriptive analysis. Data from the completed questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and results were analyzed using frequencies and cross tabulation. This helped in describing and explaining the various variables as most preferred channel of communication, most effective channel of communication. Results were further displayed in graphs and tables to give a pictorial representation of the data for better understanding. The responses to the open ended questions were coded quantitatively but the data was analyzed and presented in qualitative forms.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that were generated from the questionnaires and the interview used in gathering data for this study. In addition, this chapter also analyses the findings based on the research questions, literature reviewed and the systems theory.

4.1 Qualitative Results and Analysis

This section presents the results of the in-depth interview that was conducted with ECG's PR Manager in response to this study's research questions one and two; to examine ECG's internal crisis preparedness communication strategy and channels. The following themes were generated from the transcribed interview.

4.1.1 How ECG Communicates its Crisis Preparedness to its Employees

The interview established that ECG, as an organization, attaches a great deal of importance to crises because of the negative consequences crises have on organizations when they occur. The interviewee further noted that one major strategy they adopt to manage crises, and largely to avoid the occurrence of crises is through effective internal communication practices. According to the PR Manager, the specific communication practices used in preparing employees towards crises involve series of organizational meetings at the head office, regional, district and departmental levels. The interviewee emphasized that ECG, as an organization, believes that having frequent meetings with the staff is a major part of their crises preparation process. This is because involving employees in meetings regularly makes them feel like they are a "part of the organization, so they

understand you when you get into crises”. The interviewee elaborated on how meetings help them in communicating crisis preparedness information to their employees:

These include, the PR Manager and Managing Directors’ meeting every Tuesday, a monthly regional general meeting at the head office, weekly meetings at the district level, emergency meetings when there are crises threats to be dealt with and monthly employee durbar which helps to bring employees and managers together to discuss and be informed of the organization’s crisis plan. The quote below captures the thrust of the discussion:

ECG’s crisis communication begins with top management and it extends gradually to all employees and feedback flows from employees to top management through the same means of communication. We make sure that there is constant flow of information between management and the employees. This is how it works: the managing director of ECG holds meeting with me at the national head office every Tuesday to brief me on management’s decisions and policies regarding the organization. After relaying the information to me (the PR manager), I in turn disseminate the information, decisions and policies to all the Regional General Managers (RGM). From there, the RGMs communicate with the District Managers (DMs). Subsequently, the DMs disseminate the information to all employees within their districts. There is also a crisis team in every region to respond appropriately and on time to crisis relating to the region. This crisis team is called Regional Management Team (RMT). And they are informed of any potential crisis in the region. It is the duty of the various DMs to inform members of the RMT, any crisis that is brewing in their districts. In consultations with the RMT, the DM is responsible for monitoring and managing any potential crises situations which may arise in the district

The interview further showed that, when a crisis goes beyond the capacity of the RMT, the matter is referred to the national head office for the necessary interventions. The interviewee however stressed that not all crisis-related information is sent to the national head office.

Throwing more light on the information dissemination process, the PR manager said that information from the national head office is disseminated to all employees, without any proper segmentation. Because of ECG's inability to segment its employees, it develops a single message and shares with all employees. However, the practice is different at the district and regional levels:

Segmentation is virtually impossible because the intranet system which is the largest in terms of participants cannot segment employees; it broadcasts information to all workers. But I must say that this situation prevails only at the national level where the numbers make it impossible to segment the audience. At the regional, district and departmental levels where managers are able to communicate in the languages employees understand, messages are more personalized. Some even use the local languages because crisis issues are very sensitive, so understanding is key.

4.1.2 Channels used in Communicating Internal Crisis Preparedness Information

According to the PR Manager, ECG's crisis communication channels are the same as its Internal Crisis Communication (ICC) channels. He listed the channels as telephones, memos, e-mails, departmental meetings, durbars, intranet, website, notice board and newsletters. He categorized the channels into two – formal (departmental meetings, mobile phone calls, emails, website, notice boards, memos, durbars, newsletters and the intranet) and informal (identified union bodies and the interactive social media platforms, interpersonal communication and grapevines). The PR Manager added that:

The telephone, memos and circulars are used during emergencies... Daily and monthly meetings are held all the time and managers work with employees throughout the day through the telephone to receive and disseminate timely information to deal with (potential) crisis situations... Feedback is also sought from the various employee unions examples of which are the union for Senior Staff, Junior Staff and the Power Queens Club at which levels employees feel comfortable to share their honest opinions and give genuine feedback on issues that needs to be tackled...

According to the PR Manager, departmental meetings, durbars and the intranet system are the most effective channels to communicate crisis prevention and response messages to employees because they ensure two-way communication and enhance interaction between spokespersons and employees.

Per the data from the interview, the informal channels are very effective as far as managing and communicating crisis information is concerned. The interviewee explained that the informal channels help receive information quicker than any other means of communication. This is further complemented by these channels of communication to ensure instant or immediate feedback. The quote below captures the relevance of the informal communication channels:

Let's take the social media platforms like our WhatsApp group chats and other informal channels such as the union groups or interpersonal conversation. Because they are informal, I receive information via them than the formal or official ones that sometimes involve bureaucratic system of statistics and reports writing. Because most of these employees have my number, all they do is to call me or send me messages about a potential problem that can degenerate into a crisis. From there, I move on to tackle the issue, till formal complaints are lodged. Again, we have WhatsApp groups where we chat. I monitor from the conversations on the PR group chat which am part, to identify employees' grievances and the issues that deserve management's attention. I then move to solve the issue. Sometimes you can gather information through common informal conversation with the staff. I keep open lines of communication with leaders of the labor groups. Additionally, I am in some WhatsApp groups with them, so I am able to pick up information about their activities including strike actions, so sometimes before they move on with their plan, management would meet and discuss with them for peace to reign.

In spite of the significant roles communication channels play in communicating information on crises, the interviewer said some of the channels also have their shortcomings. He explained the challenge with departmental meetings and durbars:

The success of durbar solely depends on employees' readiness to be interactive... sometimes there is what I call zero rapport because employees are afraid to step on toes and be reported by management. Sometimes I do all the talking, which does not help in identifying potential crises.

According to the PR Manager, employees are not motivated to use the intranet because it is only accessible to employees who work within the office premises. He mentioned that the major challenges with this type of channel are poor internet connectivity and employees' inability to understand the content of the messages sent. To solve challenges associated with the use of intranets, the interviewee said staff durbars and departmental meetings are used to complement the intranet so that the messages on the intranet they didn't understand are discussed at the durbar. Moreover, employees who did not understand the messages on the intranet can seek clarity during durbar.

Regarding the use of social media platforms in communicating crisis information, it was discovered that ECG does not use social media (such as Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as its crisis communication channel. Although selected groups such as management and some departments use WhatsApp platforms for communicating the day-to-day activities in the organization, it is not recognized as an official channel. The PR Manager confirmed that social media is "faster, reliable and effective to ECG's operations". The challenge with this platform is its limited number of participants at a time and poor network connectivity.

4.1.3 How Feedbacks are Managed Successfully

The interviewee said the information flow is from top management to employees and vice versa. Messages are transmitted from top management through memos, notice boards, newsletters, website, durbars, intranet and face-to-face meetings to spokespersons. Then spokespersons (DMs, PROs and union leaders) communicate across to all employees via monthly durbars at both district and regional offices. Employees' feedback is received via the intranet, website, face-to-face meetings, departmental meetings, durbars and union bodies.

4.2.0 Quantitative Results and Analysis

100 questionnaires were distributed to 100 employees from five ECG regions. 81 out of the 100 questionnaires were completed representing 81% response rate. This section presents the results of the questionnaires distributed to the ECG employees.

4.2.1 Demographics of Respondents

Most of the respondents were male (70.4%). More than half of the respondents (55%) fell between 36 to 45 years of age. 43 respondents (58%) had worked in ECG for more than 20 years, those who had worked between 11 and 20 years were 29 (33%) and 9 had worked for three and four years (11%). Out of the 81 respondents, more than 63 (66.3%) of them had tertiary and post graduate education and 16 (21%) had secondary, technical and other education. 38 (46.9%) of the respondents were senior staff, 36 (44.4%) and 7 (8.6%) were junior and management staff.

4.2.2 Employee Awareness of their Organization's Crisis Management Processes

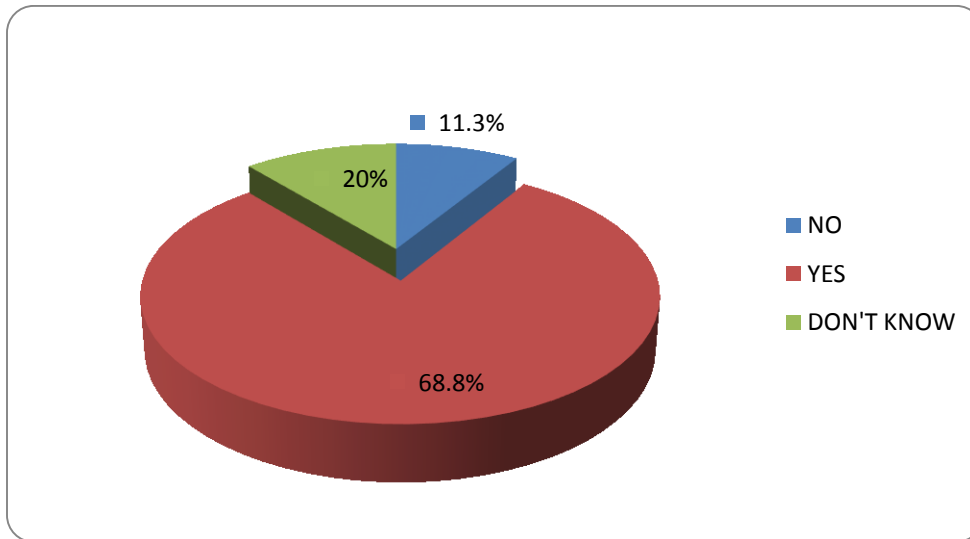


Figure 1: A graph showing Employees' Awareness of the Existing Crisis Management Communications

Figure 1 above shows that a little more than half of the respondents (55 representing 68.8%) are aware that their company has a crisis communication plan in place and know about their responsibilities as employees in case there is a crisis. However, 16 respondents representing a quarter of the respondents (20%) have no idea it exists, whereas 9 respondents (11.3%) are saying their organization has no crisis communication plan.

4.2.2.1 A Cross-Tabulation of Staff Category and their Knowledge of CMP

KNOWLEDGE OF ECG'S CMP	WHICH STAFF LEVEL DO YOU BELONG TO			Total
	MANAGEMENT	SENIOR	JUNIOR	
NO	0 0.0%	2 22.2%	7 77.8%	9 100.0%
YES	3 5.5%	29 52.7%	23 41.8%	55 100.0%
DONT KNOW	4 25.0%	6 37.5%	6 37.5%	16 100.0%
TOTAL	7 8.8%	37 46.2%	36 45.0%	80 100.0%

Table 1: A table showing a cross-tabulation showing Staff Category and Their Awareness of Its Organization's ICC

The above table made it necessary to know which category of employees were aware of ECG's ICC processes. A relationship between the categories of staff and their awareness of their organization's crisis preparedness communications shows that 29 out of 37 senior staff (52.7%) are most informed. Whereas, four out of seven management staff (25.5%) and 13 out of 36 junior staff (55.3%) do not know it exists. By far, senior staff have a higher perception of their organizations' crisis preparations.

4.2.3 Sources of Crisis Information

Source of Information on Crisis	Frequency	Valid Percent
HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT	37	45.7
PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT	21	25.9
DEPARTMENTAL HEAD	15	18.5
CO-WORKERS	5	6.2
GRAPEVINE	1	1.2
OTHER	2	2.5
TOTAL	81	100.0

Table 2: Sources of Employees Internal Crisis Communications

More than half of the respondents (46%) representing majority, have identified their source of crisis information as the HR department. Roughly, a quarter of them are saying their source is from the PR department (26%), 15 respondents get their source of information from departmental heads (18%) and the rest of the respondents are saying their co-workers (6%) and the Grapevine give them crisis information (2%). This results show that majority of *ECG's* crisis communications (45.7%) come from the HR department. PR department (25.9%) and other departmental heads (18.5%) also participates in the communications. Less of the information is from the grapevine and co-workers.

4.2.4 Employee Participation in Crisis Drills

Participation in Crisis Drills	Frequency	Valid Percent
YES	61	80.3
NO	15	19.7
Total	76	100.0

Table 3: Employees' Participation In Crisis Drills

61 respondents (80.3%) have experienced crisis drills but 15 respondents (19.7%) are saying they have not been engaged in any crisis drill or exercises. This result indicates that majority of ECG employees have been prepared physically through crisis drills and knows how to manage real crisis situations when they occur.

4.2.5 Clarity of Crisis Communication Messages

Clarity of Information	Frequency	Valid Percent
STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	6.2
DISAGREE	14	17.3
AGREE	55	67.9
STRONGLY AGREE	7	8.6
TOTAL	81	100.0

Table 4: Clarity of Information Flow on Crisis Communication Plan

Table 4 shows that more than two-thirds (68%) of the respondents perceive the information management communicates to them as comprehensible and 7 (9%) respondents are strongly in

agreement. However, 14 (17%) respondents, are saying that they hardly understand the information disseminated on their crises policies and procedures. 5 (6%) respondents strongly supported this statement. The results indicate that majority of employees understand the messages communicated to them.

4.2.6 Employees’ Access to Crisis Preparedness Information and Feedback

Access to Information on Crisis Preparedness	Frequency	Valid Percent
STRONGLY DISAGREE	11	13.6
DISAGREE	23	28.4
AGREE	42	51.9
STRONGLY AGREE	5	6.2
TOTAL	81	100.0

Table 5: A table showing the extent of Information Flow on Crisis Preparedness

From table 5, 42 (52%) respondents are receiving consistent feedback and are accessing information on their organizations’ crisis preparedness communication easily. 5 respondents (6%) are strongly in agreement with this statement. The rest of the respondents (42%) disagree with this statement; they have difficulty accessing information and feedback is delayed.

4.2.7 Knowledge of Crisis Communication Channels to Access Information during Crisis

Knowledge on Crisis Communication Channels	Frequency	Valid Percent
STRONGLY DISAGREE	8	9.9
DISAGREE	12	14.8
AGREE	55	67.9
STRONGLY AGREE	6	7.4
TOTAL	81	100.0

Table 6: Awareness of Internal Crisis Communication Channels During Crisis

68% of the respondents know which communication channel to access current updates on crises and 7% of the respondents agreed with them. However, 25% of the respondents do not know the channel to check updates from when there is a crisis.

4.2.8 Most Effective Crisis Communication Channel

Channel	Frequency	Valid Percent
SOCIAL MEDIA	7	9.5
E-MAIL	3	4.1
DURBAR	32	43.2
TELEPHONE CALLS	8	10.8
DEPARTMENTAL MEETINGS	7	9.5
INTRANET	2	2.7
NOTICE BOARDS	6	8.1
MEMOS	2	2.7
COMPANY WEBSITE	7	9.5
Total	74	100.0

Table 7: A table showing the most Effective Communication Channel for Communicating Crisis

From table 7, the most effective channel employees want crisis information to be communicated through to them is durbar, according to 43% of respondents. 11% respondents are saying telephone calls and 10% respondents are saying communication through Social media, departmental meetings and company website is the most effective. Communication through e-mails, memos and intranet are ineffective and is not considered for effective communication.

4.2.9 A Cross-Tabulation of Staff Category and the Channel Considered Effective for Communicating Crisis Information Internally

	WHICH ONE DO YOU PREFER AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE CHANNEL TO BE USED IN COMMUNICATING CRISES INFORMATION TO YOU									Total
	Social Media	E-Mail	Durbar	Telephone Calls	Departmental Meetings	Intranet	Notice Boards	Memos	Company Website	
MANAGEMENT	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	0 0.0%	1 16.7%	0 0.0%	2 33.3%	6 100.0%
SENIOR	4 10.8%	3 8.1%	19 51.4%	4 10.8%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	3 8.1%	1 2.7%	1 2.7%	37 100.0%
JUNIOR	3 9.7%	0 0.0%	12 38.7%	3 9.7%	5 16.1%	1 3.2%	2 6.5%	1 3.2%	4 12.9%	31 100.0%
TOTAL	7 9.5%	3 4.1%	32 43.2%	8 10.8%	7 9.5%	2 2.7%	6 8.1%	2 2.7%	7 9.5%	74 100.0%

Table 8: A table showing the relationship between staff category and their most Effective Channel for Communicating Crisis Information

Considering the employee preferences of most effective communication channel across staff categories, 39% junior and 51% senior staff are saying durbar is the most effective channel for internal crisis communication. In addition to this, senior staff considers social media (11%) and telephone calls (11%) as other most effective channels in reaching them. In addition to durbar, junior staff considers departmental meetings (16%) and company website (13%). However, both

senior and junior staff do not like the intranet (3%) and memos (3%) to be used in communicating with them. 33% of management staff considers the company website as the most effective channel in communicating with them.

4.2.10 Employees' Reasons for Selecting their Most Preferred ICC Channel

	Frequency	Valid Percent
PROMPT	4	6.2
ENHANCES COMMUNICATION	10	15.4
INTERACTIVE	15	23.1
CONSISTENT UPDATES	2	3.1
EASILY ACCESSIBLE	19	29.2
ENHANCES RELATIONSHIP	9	13.8
CLARITY	6	9.2
TOTAL	65	100.0

Table 9: A table showing Employees' why employees chose their most Preferred Channel

Durbar is chosen as the preferred channel because it is easily accessible (29%), interactive (23%), enhances communication (15%) and enhances employee relations (14%). However, information delivered through durbar is not prompt nor consistent. Social media is preferred because communication through it is prompt, consistent, easily accessible and enhances effective communication however, message is neither interactive nor self-explanatory.

4.3 Analysis of Findings

The study sought to examine the internal communication strategies and channels used by ECG in its preparations towards crises and its employees' perceptions of those channels used in the process. The analysis of the findings in this section of the chapter is done by answering the research questions based on the findings and linking the findings to the systems theory as well as the literature reviewed in chapter two.

4.3.1 How Do ECG's Crisis Communication Strategies Adequately Prepare its Employees for Crises?

From the findings, it was identified that ECG as an organization, acknowledged that crisis is a major threat to their productivity, hence preventive measures must be put in place and duly communicated to employees. Additionally, ECG has crises team which exist in the regional offices to address issues that have the tendency to escalate into a crisis. ECG's crisis preparedness information strategy targets all the employees of the organization. The strategy has been integrated into in the organizational culture where existing communication channels and processes are adopted in communicating its preparedness towards future crisis. The strategy includes series of meetings in all three levels of communication; individual, group and organizational levels, and employs a top-down and bottom-up communication approach. Before employees receive communication, decisions are made at the general manager's weekly meeting, then it is shared with RGMs who also share the information at their regional monthly meetings with DMs and the members of the RMT. Then the DMs communicate directly to their employees in their monthly durbars.

This finding indicates that the principles of interaction and interdependence, as embedded in the systems theory, are practiced by ECG. Communication of crisis information involves all members of the system in order to respond to crises effectively. The two-way communication process where feedbacks to and from employees and management is essential and highlights on the nature of interdependence in the organization.

Findings from the survey confirms that majority of ECG employees (80%) have been prepared physically through crisis drills and on how to manage real crisis situations when they occur while more than half of employees (68%) understand clearly the messages communicated by management. This finding confirms the findings of Kovoov et al (2000) and Boz and Kucukaltan (2013) that companies with pre-crisis planning strategies can overcome crises easily when they emerge. This study's finding differs from that of Fowler et al; that employees at management level know more about crisis preparedness than the lower-ranked employees. In this study, there was no difference in the level of awareness of CMP between the two employee groups.

4.3.2 What Channels do ECG use in Communicating its Crisis Preparedness to its Employees?

The same channels used for internal communication purposes are used by ECG in preparing its employees towards crisis. The channels are oral, electronic and written forms. The channels include telephone calls, memos, e-mails, departmental meetings, durbar, the intranet, company website, WhatsApp chat, durbar, intranet, interaction with employee unions (for Senior Staff, Junior Staff and the Power Queens Club) and departmental meetings. The use of these channels enable both top-down and bottom-up approaches to communication, as most of the channels enable

two-way communication. Based on feedbacks from employees, the PR department is informed of the potential crises and acts to prevent them from occurring.

As much as these channels aid in effectively communicating crisis information, they also possess some challenges. For instance, during group meetings such as departmental and staff durbars, junior employees feel intimidated to express their opinions. Therefore, suggestions and views tend to come from very few people. However, this challenge is dealt with through interpersonal communication and informal communication where employees who were unable to talk during discussions at durbars could also share their views among themselves and the union groups.

4.3.3. Which Communication Channels have ECG Employees Perceived as Effective?

Telephone calls, departmental meeting, social media and website were identified as the most effective channels of communication. Generally, durbar remains the most effective choice since a little below half of the respondents (43%) consider it as the most effective ICC channel. This finding is confirmed by responses from interviewee; that durbar, departmental meetings and union leaders are effective ICC channels but durbar is the most effective of all. The finding illustrates the assertion of Ampofo-Bekoe (2014) that, using channels that are easily accessible to employees is the most effective communicating channel within an organization. Similarly, employees preferred face-to-face channels of communication because it strengthened interpersonal relationships within the organization, a finding which also supports Arins' (2013) study. The preference for durbars and departmental meetings also relates to the open system component of

the systems theory where all employees are allowed to participate in discussions relating to the organization. It also means all the workers and the departments are connected.

4.3.4. Which of the Internal Communication Channels used by ECG Employees is the Most Preferred Channel?

Social media channels were chosen as respondent's preferred channel of communication. This finding is affirmed with a study on the use of social media as a crisis communication tool conducted by Heradstveit and Hagen (2011) in three oil and gas companies in America. The study found that information flow on social media is faster. It also has a wider coverage and helps in establishing good stakeholder relationships since it provides two-way communication. Although the social media platform, WhatsApp, is not officially accepted as a means of communication in the organization, the study finding suggested that it is still used in an informal way to disseminate and share information among employees. Social media is preferred by respondents because communication through it is prompt, consistent, easily accessible and enhances effective communication.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the concluding aspect of the study. The first section of the study comprises the summary of the study. Additionally, the chapter also contains the limitations, recommendations for further study and the conclusion.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study focused on the internal crisis communication preparedness that exists in Electricity Company of Ghana, with the main objective of determining how the organization executes its crisis communication plan and employees' perception of the channels used in this process. This study was premised on the systems theory. In response to the research questions, an in-depth interview was conducted with the ECG PR Manager and results of the responses were analyzed using ethnography summary.

In addition, a survey was conducted with 100 ECG employees. Responses from the 81% of the respondents were analyzed using SPSS and results presented in graphs and tables. Findings from this study showed that ECG has a crisis preparedness strategy in place to inform employees of potential crises. In addition, the study uncovered that social media, group meetings and intranet were chosen as the preferred and most effective channels of communicating crisis-related information.

5.2 Limitations

The study encountered a number of challenges. It was very difficult gaining access to the employees, hence it took the researcher a long time to administer the questionnaires to the respondents. The sample size was also small so the findings cannot be generalized to other employees in other organizations. Future studies must expand the scope of the study and conduct it on a larger scale considering a different methodology.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings identified in the study and with considerations to the Ghanaian context and organizational culture, the following are outlined as recommendations for building strong internal crisis communication strategies:

- a) Internal crisis preparedness communication is important to enable organizations prepare towards crises. This debate is extensive and in order to help persuade organizations to take up crisis management plan and communication to help improve on crisis management, there is the need for more case studies on on how crisis communication content is developed, the differences between internal and external crisis communication in Africa.
- b) In developing an internal crisis communication strategy, organizations need to consider factors such as the communication objective, the message, sender or communicator, categories of employees and management, the communication and timeline.
- c) Regular audit of the existing communication channels needs to be done to characterize the relationship between management and employees in order to help build better relationships prior crises.

- d) Empowering the crisis teams to properly define and assume their roles within the organization for them to perform their duties effectively.
- e) Rebranding the website to encourage usage, easy access to information and improve interaction between management and employees
- f) Enhancing the features of the intranet to consider employees who work outside the office premises so as to improve communication through the intranet.

5.4 Conclusion

Crisis communication continues to attract the interest of scholars in public relations and organizational communication. It was in the same vein that this study was conducted to examine the crisis preparedness strategy of the Electricity Company of Ghana. Among other things, this study sought to establish the effectiveness of the various communication channels that are used in communicating crisis-related information to employees. The study found that the crisis communication plan of ECG is modelled on their internal communication strategy. This means that the organization does not have a separate communication platform solely dedicated to crises. ECG crisis communication plan involves employees, regional and district managers as well as head office staff. Thus, the organization has a holistic approach to communicating crisis information. Durbar is the most effective channel of communication and employees prefer social media to be used in communicating crisis-related information with them.

This study agrees with Selart et al.'s (2002) statement, that the way leadership handles crises most often has an impact on its relationship with the employees. It is therefore, important that ECG has a communication plan to communicate information to its employees; although more efforts needs

to be geared towards making the information readily available and accessible to all the employees. The findings of the study confirm previous scholarship on the subjects and also illustrate the tenets of the systems theory.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PR MANAGER

1. Can you give a brief background of your organization with regards to employee population and locations?
2. What roles do you play in terms of internal crisis communication?
3. Which strategic plans are in place to help you communicate with employees during crisis and which channels would they seek information from?
4. Which groups of employees are segmented to be communicated to and why?
5. Which specific channels are used in disseminating crisis preventive and response messages to employees and what are the reasons for choosing those channels.
6. What are the challenges involved in using the channels chosen?
7. What details or themes are considered appropriate when communicating the information to your employees, and why?
8. How do you receive feedback and in turn provide responses to the employees' feedback?
9. Do you use social media in communicating with your employees? If yes, how do you use social media in communicating crisis preparedness to your employees? What are some examples of the internal communication challenges you encountered using this selected channel?
10. Is there an internal audit in place to find out employees' perception of the communication and the effectiveness of your communication?
11. Was there an audit carried out to find out employees' perception about the communication strategies in place? What were the findings?

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES

COMMUNICATING CRISIS PREPAREDNESS: A CASE STUDY OF ELECTRICITY COMPANY OF GHANA

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of the Department of Communication Studies in University of Ghana, Legon. I am gathering data to conduct a study on the topic: “Communicating crisis preparedness: a case study of Electricity Company of Ghana” as part of my long essay.

I would appreciate if you could spend a little of your time to respond to this questionnaire. Information provided in this regard will be used purposefully for academic endeavor and shall be treated strictly confidential.

Thank you for your corporation.

Please fill the spaces provided. Mark (√) where applicable and specify where necessary.

Demographics

1. Gender:

- 1) Male []
- 2) Female []

2. Among which of the age groups do you belong?

- 1) 18-35 []
- 2) 36-45 years []
- 3) 46-55 []
- 4) 56-60 years []

3. What is your highest level of education?

- 1) JHS []
- 2) Secondary or Technical []
- 3) Tertiary []
- 4) Post graduate []
- 5) Other []

4. Which staff level do you belong to?

- 1) Management Staff
- 2) Senior Staff
- 3) Junior Staff

5. How long have you been working with ECG?

Effective Communication Channels

6. As an employee, does your company have a communication plan which informs you on which actions to take when the company is in crisis?

- 1) No []
- 2) Yes []
- 3) Don't know []

7. I understand the messages communicated to me on crisis policies and procedures and know what is required of me during a crisis.

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Agree
- 4) Strongly Agree

8. Most of the information I receive on crisis comes from: (if other please specify)

- 1) Human Resource department
- 2) Public relations department
- 3) My departmental head
- 4) Co-workers
- 5) Grapevine
- 6) Please specify if other

9. I am well informed of the communication channel to access current updates or information in case my organization is in crisis?

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) 2) Disagree
- 3) 3) Agree
- 4) 4).Strongly Agree

10. I have easy access and immediate responses to all the information the company communicates.

- 1) Strongly Disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Agree
- 4). Strongly Agree

11. As an ECG employee, have you experienced any drill activity on a crisis situation?'

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

If answer in question 11 is yes, then please answer the remaining questions.

12. Which of these communication channels were the most effective tools used in communicating ECG’s crisis activities to you? Please indicate your preference by ticking (√) on a scale of 1(least) to 5(highly).

No.	Channel of communication	Not Preferred	Least Preferred	Neutral	Preferred	Highly Preferred
1	Social media (Facebook, twitter etc.)					
2	E-mail					
3	Durbar					
4	Telephone calls					
5	Departmental meetings					
6	Intranet					
7	Newsletter					
8	Notice boards					
9	News fliers					
10	Memos					
11	Face-to-face meetings					

12	Company website					
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Preferred Communication Channel

12. Out of the list chosen from question 11, which one do you prefer as the most effective to be used in communicating information to you?

.....

13. Why is this channel your most preferred?

.....
.....
.....

14. Is there any other channel you would like to be used to communicate with you that is not included in the list used by ECG?

.....