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**Crisis Communication: A case study of the Integrated
Master Plan Crisis in Oromia regional state**

A Thesis

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DECLARATION

Addis Ababa University Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Minale Gebeyehu entitled Crisis Communication: A case study of the Integrated Master Plan Crisis in Oromia regional state and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in PR and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality signed by the Examining Committee:

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA = Addis Ababa

CP = Command Post

MA = Master of Art

IMP = Integrated Master Plan

PR = Public Relations

ABSTRACT

Crisis communication is an important part of public relations that could have either constructive or risky consequences based upon the action that an organization acts in response. This study aimed to find out the crisis communication management of the Oromia state government. Theories of crisis management and crisis communication were employed to identify models of best practices for crisis management and to apply these models to analyze the effectiveness of government's response to the crisis due to the new integrated master plan, a master plan for Addis Ababa city and towns on the outskirts of the city.

A content analysis of 58 articles from five newspapers; Reporter, Capital, Addis Zemen, Fortune, and Barissa, was conducted to examine how government responded to the crisis of integrated master plan. Results revealed that government's response incorporated both best practices of crisis communication, as well as crisis responses that could be categorized as unethical. Such unethical responses included evasion of responsibility, attack of the accuser, minimization, and denial, while effective crisis communication tactics consisted of updating the public in a clear and concise manner, acknowledgment of mistake, and expressing sympathy and concern.

In-depth interview were also conducted with eight participants from public relation practitioners to examine the communication strategies employed in the different phases of the crisis, the effectiveness of crisis communication strategy, media usage, influence of organizational culture in crisis communication, and stakeholder's consideration. Results revealed that different media were employed during the crisis period, organizational culture has influenced crisis management and communication, and the role of stakeholders was mostly considered from an organization's perspective and stakeholders were seen purely as receivers of organizational messages.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In today's society crisis is certain and requires the ability to manage it. Things could go wrong for organizations such as breakdown of services, human error which can create problem to customers causing crisis. Crises can also occur with issues related to politics, races, or religion. Therefore to survive any crisis the ability to manage the crisis has huge importance. The action that an organization takes can have either positive or negative consequences. The consequences could have implications on finances and reputation of the organization, which in turn contribute to the overall success or failure of the organization in the future.

A crisis is traditionally defined as an unusual situation or unexpected event that can affect individuals or organizations, may cause financial and reputational damage, or can threaten stakeholder relations (Coombs, 2009; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). Scholars point out that crisis communication plays a significant role in transforming the crisis situation by responding quickly, efficiently, and effectively to it (Coombs, 2010c; Fediuk, Coombs, & Botero, 2010).

An example of a crisis considered in this study is the strike against the proposed new integrated master plan, a master plan for Addis Ababa and towns on the outskirts of the city. Urban planners from Addis Ababa and the Oromia Regional State have been working on an integrated master plan for over two years. Despite the optimism surrounding the impact the master plan could have on Addis Ababa and surrounding Oromia towns on the outskirts, there has been some criticism over the lack of inclusiveness in the process. This led to protests in the Oromia region, resulting in a number of fatalities, damages, and displacements.

The integrated master plan crisis serves as the focus for the present study, as it offers an important case for viewing government's crisis communication in action. I.e. the Oromia communication bureau was examined based on evidence of its crisis communication. Before government's crisis communication can be studied empirically, however, it is important to understand this topic more broadly. Chapter two, literature Review, discusses and describes what

constitutes a crisis, types of crisis, crisis management, crisis communication, and relevant theoretical frameworks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Bernstein, (2013), no organization is immune to crises. Therefore, the importance of efficient crisis communication cannot be underestimated as it assists organizations in dealing with the crisis that has the probability of bringing a lot of harm to the organization's image and reputation hence overall business performance (Fearn-Banks, 2007).

Too often, companies and organizations make the mistake of waiting for crisis to happen and then responding to it. No matter how much damage control a company does, it's hard to overcome an embarrassing clip from a movie or TV show that will be permanently stamped in the minds of millions of viewers. A better approach is "crisis prevention" (Gabrowski Mark, 2010).

In effective handling of a crisis, preparation and anticipation are key considerations. Of course, sometimes crises will occur even when all possible preparations have been made. So, every organization needs a plan to enable it to handle a crisis quickly and effectively if the need arises (Ellie, 2010).

Although research in crisis communication has largely increased, scholars still see a need for research in terms of cultural influence, applicability of communication strategies, and stakeholder consideration (Coombs, 2010b; Heath, 2010;).

In Oromia regional state crisis events are well experienced but are not investigated formally. Therefore, this study based on the research questions tries to let us know the research gaps; what we do not formally know regarding the crisis communication; e.g. No study has investigated the crisis communication in regard to the new integrated master plan, a master plan for Addis Ababa and towns on the outskirts of the city. While there is a regional communication bureau, research needs to identify different aspects of the work of the bureau during the crisis period. The study

investigates the existence of an adequate crisis planning and what strategies were employed in the different phases of the crisis. The study also investigates what media were used to address the different publics and their relative importance of the different media employed. Further more the study investigates the level of effectiveness of the crisis communication and the challenges in the management of the crisis via communication.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are

To determine the pre-crisis communication plan of Oromia regional government communication bureau and the different strategic mechanisms employed in the three phases of the crisis (pre crisis, during crisis, and after crisis).

To determine types of media (traditional and social media) used in crisis communication and their relative importance

To find out the level of effectiveness of the crisis communication and the challenges in the management of the crisis via communication

To find out whether culture influence crisis communication or not

To find out how are stakeholders considered in crisis communication in Oromia region

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions Guiding Content Analysis

1. What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response, as portrayed in Reporter, Capital, Fortune, Addis Zemen, and in Berissa news papers?
2. What were the topics addressed in the articles about the integrated master plan crisis and government's crisis response within the Reporter, Capital, Fortune, Addis Zemen, and Berissa?
3. What response strategies did government engage in during different stages of the crisis?
4. Is there evidence that government engaged in unethical crisis communication; if yes, what are the most frequently used unethical strategies?

Research Questions Guiding interview

1. What crisis communication plan, if at all, did Oromia Communication Office have before the crisis?
2. What strategies were employed in the different phases of the crisis?
3. What media were used in the management of the crisis communication?
4. What was the relative importance of the different media employed?
5. What were the challenges in the management of the crisis via communication?
6. What was the level of effectiveness of the crisis communication?
7. How does culture influence crisis communication and its effectiveness?
8. How are stakeholders considered in crisis communication in Oromia region?

SCOPE

During the new integrated master plan crisis period there were a lot of other crises in Oromia regional state. Some of these crises were sprung up in connection to the master plan. There were also other crises having no relation with the new integrated master plan. This thesis project encompasses only crisis that directly arose from the new integrated master plan. Other crises cases are not included in this study.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

The following individuals or institutions benefited from the findings of the study:

Government. This study would provide a basis on making or improving government policies, rules and regulations regarding crisis communication and management. The state government should take the findings and recommendations into consideration to apply them for future to mitigate the damage and loss due to crisis.

The stakeholders. The stakeholders could derive benefits from this study because whatever rules and policies that the government issues, they will be the end recipients. Active participation by stakeholders has a great impact to mitigate the negative impact on the environment and stakeholders. Thus, helps the stakeholders to be active participants and contributors during crisis.

Researcher. Researchers will be benefited by making this study as one of the references in their future study. The results of the study will benefit the researchers since they can use it as a guideline in pursuance of their further knowledge and research about this kind of topic.

LIMITATIONS

Although this research project revealed important trends in the nature of media coverage regarding the integrated master plan and government's response to it, there are some limitations that must be taken into consideration. The sample size for the content analysis conducted is one limitation, as only 58 articles were selected. This small number may not accurately capture the full range of topics addressed and actions taken by government throughout the crisis. Additionally since only five local newspapers were examined, the study likely did not identify the wide range of government responses and media coverage of such responses.

THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter one is Introduction that gives an overview over the research area, problem statement and research questions. Chapter two presents literature review. It consists of topics about crisis, types of crisis, crisis management, crisis communication, and different theories about crisis management and crisis communication. Chapter three defines the methodology and discusses the selected data collection methods. Chapter four introduces the research findings from the interviews and the content analysis. Chapter five examines and discusses the findings. Finally, Chapter six presents the research conclusions and recommendations as well as topics for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CRISIS

A crisis, by definition, is an event, revelation, allegation, or set of circumstances which threatens the integrity, reputation, or survival of an individual or organization. It challenges the public's sense of safety, values, or appropriateness. The actual potential damage to the organization is considerable and the organization cannot, on its own, put an immediate end to it (Sapriel, 2003)

A crisis may be defined as any situation that is threatening or could threaten to harm people or property, seriously interrupt business, damage reputation or negatively impact share value. (Bernstein, 2010)

There are many descriptions of crisis, and although there is no commonly shared definition, scholars have made diverse attempts to characterize crises events and types. The following are some definitions given by some scholars of the field about crisis.

A specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that creates high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization's high priority goals (Ulmer et al., 2007)

W. Timothy Coombs defines a crisis as "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (Coombs, 2010). Coombs points out that crisis can have either positive or negative outcomes and that "opportunity and threat are more a function of the outcomes of crisis management rather than a defining characteristic of crisis" (Coombs, 2010).

Barton defines a crisis as "an incident that is unexpected, negative, and overwhelming" (Barton, 2001). Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer agree that a crisis is unexpected, and add that a crisis is often perceived as a threat to an organization's goals (Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer, 1998).

(Adkins, 2010) combined the most common crisis definitions and summarized them into the following: An unexpected and unpredictable event which is caused by some type of event, threatens organization's stakeholders' expectations, places no routine demands on organizations, produces uncertainty in an organization, has a negative impact on organizational performance, potentially produces negative outcomes, threatens high-priority organizational goals, harms either the organization or the public, and produces accusations concerning the organization(s) involved.

Crises can be inevitable, in the case of natural disasters for instance, or they could be avoided in the case of man-made crises. Nonetheless, a crisis affects the organization as a whole and can have serious implications on its reputation and operations, among other things. (Mitroff & Anagos, 2000) A crisis can be seen to cause three types of threats that are interrelated. These threats concern the safety of the public, financial losses and the loss of reputation. Usually, a crisis affects the reputation of the company inevitably as well as the financials of an organization either directly or indirectly. (Coombs, 2007a)

Crises can negatively affect an organization's reputation by disrupting the relationship between the stakeholders and the organization. Stakeholders trust an organization to work or act in a certain way, but a crisis can disrupt the organization and its functioning. This can cause negative feelings among the stakeholders which then affect the organization's reputation. Crises can also have other negative effects and outcomes on an organization. In addition to financial losses, crises can damage the environment, causes physical injuries to its stakeholders or it can lead to changes throughout the affected industry. (Coombs, 2015a)

(Mitroff and Anagos, 2000) distinguish major risks and crises that all organizations may face. These include economic crises, natural disasters, crises related to human resources, informational, reputational and physical crises, and also psychopathic acts. These different categories of risks and crises all involve different acts or events that can harm an organization and the public. For example, a kidnapping or violence is psychopathic acts whereas revealing confidential information is an informational crisis.

(Falkenheimer and Heide, 2010) explain that crises are social, political, and cultural phenomena that originate in a great number of interacting causes and events, which through their complexity cannot be predicted. (Benoit, 1997a), on the other hand, argued that although crises come in a variety of forms, some potential crises can be anticipated. An airline, for example, has to expect an airplane crash every moment, just as a restaurant should always be prepared for cases of food poisoning. Scholars point out that organizations are exposed to possible crises every day which can damage an organization's reputation and cause stakeholders' disapproval. Crisis events can range from property damage or loss, loss of life, environmental harm, to questionable decisions of the management (Fediuk, Coombs, & Botero, 2010; González-Herrero & Pratt, 1995).

TYPES OF CRISES

Crisis communication scholars have developed various approaches to categorize crisis types. (Parsons, 1996) divided crises into three different types: First, immediate - little or no warning that the crisis is on the way; second, emerging - slow in coming to a head, but no more predictable; and third, sustained -can last for weeks, months, or even years.

(Mitroff, 2004), on the other hand, assigned crisis events into seven major groups: First, economic, such as labor problems, stock market falls or crashes, and economic downturns; second, informational, such as loss of data, data tampering, and false information; third, physical, such as loss of key equipment, plants, material supplies, product failures, and explosions; fourth, human resources, such as death of key personnel, corruption, and workplace violence; fifth, reputational, such as defamation, gossip, rumors, and damage to reputation; sixth, psychopathic acts, such as product tampering, terrorism, criminal acts, and hostage taking; and last, natural disasters, such as fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes.

(Ulmer et al., 2007) grouped crises by intentional acts of individuals and unintentional, unforeseeable events. Intentional crisis includes acts such as terrorism, sabotage, workplace violence, poor employee relationships, hostile takeovers, and unethical leadership. The unintentional crisis category includes natural disasters, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable

technical interactions, product failure, and downturns in the economy.

Hearit and Roberson list several types of crises in the Handbook of Risk and Crisis Communication. These include allegations, crises in public perception, natural disasters, product or service crises, terrorist attacks, economic crises, human resource crises, industrial crises, oil and chemical spills, transportation disasters, scandals and illegalities, accidents, product safety incidents, and social irresponsibility (Hearit and Roberson, 2010). For each type of crises, different crisis management and communication strategies should be employed. In order to understand which tactic would be most effective in remedying the crisis, it is important to understand what each particular type of crisis entails.

According to Ware and Linkugel, an allegation is “an attack on a person’s character,” but it can also be applied to an entire organization when a claim or accusation is made regarding the organization, its decisions, or its reputation (Ware and Linkugel, 1973). Furthermore, an allegation may be brought against an individual or organization, which may prove to be true or false. Because it is based in assertions and can be detrimental to an organization if false allegations are brought against an organization, Ware and Linkugel assert that this type of crisis seems “to demand a direct response” (Ware and Linkugel, 1973).

According to Hearit and Roberson, scandals and illegalities, “refers to those incidents in which there is a violation of a social code,” such as an executive whose private indiscretion has drawn negative attention to the entire organization or involved legal attention (Hearit and Roberson, 2010). Hearit and Roberson assert that scandals and illegalities “often can be dealt with cleanly and directly” (Hearit and Roberson, 2010).

Accidents entail an unexpected outcome, in which “lives are lost or the environment is despoiled” (Hearit, 2001). Another type of crisis is social irresponsibility. During this crisis, “corporate actors are seen to act in ways that violate publicly held social values, speak in politically incorrect ways, or have otherwise behaved in such a way as to give fuel to special interest or advocacy groups looking to ‘make an issue’ with their enemies” (Hearit and

Roberson, 2010). Handling crises of social irresponsibility is similar to management of scandals and illegalities, which also violates social codes, and can be dealt with in a direct approach.

On the other hand (Coombs, 2015a) distinguishes two types of crises, disasters and organizational crisis. Coombs defines disasters are large, sudden events that cause disruption and require the participation of several governmental agents. Disasters can also cause organizational crises and even in some occasions organizational crises can lead to disasters. Organizational crises too, are unpredictable and they can have a negative effect on an organization's performance and image. An organizational crisis can cause harm to an organization's stakeholders and negatively impact their safety, health or economics. (Coombs, 2015a) argues that a crisis "is the perception of an unpredictable event" and emphasizes the perceptual nature of crises. Besides, Coombs refers to the idea that a crisis exists if the stakeholders of an organization believe the organization is in a crisis. As mentioned before, crises are unpredictable, sudden events yet organizations can expect them to happen without knowing when and where.

According to (Coombs, 2015a) there are two broad types of organizational crises, which are traditional crises and social media crises. Traditional crises disturb an organization's operations, may cause harm to its stakeholders and threaten the safety and welfare of the public, whereas social media crises tend to cause harm to an organization's reputation. Nonetheless, traditional crisis also have an effect on the organization's reputation and social media crises can also be related to public safety. Often, social media crises can be described as Para crises, meaning that they are not crises yet but they have the opportunity to become one. (Coombs, 2015a)

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Due to the heightened exposure of organizations to natural and human catastrophes, crisis management is an expanding area of interest. It is one of the dominant areas in public relations research and a crucial organizational function. Crisis management is a tool designed to fight crisis, minimize the inflicted damage and protect the organization, stakeholders and industry from harm. Crisis management processes include preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations (Coombs, 2010a; Combs, 2007b).

Crisis management aims at dealing with crises that can cause harm to the public and to an organization. The purpose of crisis management is to protect the organization and also public safety. On an organizational level, crisis management can help to protect the reputation of the organization, the well being of its employees or its financial assets. Prevention of crisis is as important as minimizing the effects of a crisis that has already happened. (Coombs, 2007a) Preventative measures, crisis management plans, and post-crisis evaluations are integral components of crisis management, which can be divided into pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stages (Coombs, 2010).

(Sapriel, 2003) stated that crisis management must be directed from the top of the organization and implemented in all key business functions. Sapriel pointed out that statistics illustrate that most organizational crises originate with management inaction or neglect and are non-event-related. Bad business judgment or mismanagement (corporate, individual, or governmental) is more likely to threaten organizational existences than one-time events (Heath, 2010). Conventional management is often of little use in crisis situations and it does not help with coping or preventing crisis. Furthermore, (Mitroff, 2004) noted, conventional ways of thinking are often the cause of major crises.

Crisis management can be seen as an interdisciplinary practice which also uses psychology and sociology for example, as basis for its theory and practices. After all, crisis management is not only a procedure that is implemented after a crisis has happened. Crisis management is also about planning and strategizing on how to react if a crisis occurs and how to move on from a crisis. (Lockwood, 2005; Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

(Coombs, 2015a) outlines four interdependent elements of crisis management. They are prevention, preparation, response and revision. Prevention refers to precautionary actions that focus on preventing a crisis from happening. In effective crisis management, risks and warning signs are detected and appropriate action is taken to stop them from building up to a crisis. Preparation in crisis management includes actions such as making a crisis management plan,

creating a crisis communication system as well as choosing a spokesperson and identifying crisis vulnerabilities.

The goal of response is to minimize the damage crises can cause to an organization and its stakeholders, and thus response is an important component of crisis management. Unlike prevention and preparation, response is an element of crisis management that is public. Response requires putting the elements of preparations into practice and how the organization responds to a crisis is usually actively followed and commented on by the media. Recovery is a component of response as it refers to getting the organization back to its daily operations as fast as possible after a crisis. Returning to normal operations fast can help minimize financial damages. Revision is the last element of crisis management and an important part of it is evaluating what was done well and what was done badly. Evaluation of the actions taken covers all elements of crisis management, from prevention to response and recovery. The element of revision can lead to organizational learning and better crisis management in the future. (Coombs, 2015a)

Many theories have been developed to explain crises. Staged approaches that divide crises into stages are some of the most acknowledged and used theories about crisis management. The benefit of these models is that they allow crisis managers to evaluate and plan their crisis communication needs in advance. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) Two of these models are the three-stage model by Coombs and Steven Fink's four-stage model. (Coombs, 2007a) identifies three stages of crisis management. The first stage is called pre-crisis, the second stage is crisis response and the third stage is post-crisis. This three-stage crisis model is widely used to analyze crises as well as in theories of crisis communication (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013).

The pre-crisis stage focuses on preventing crises. In order to be able to prevent a crisis from happening, known risks are identified and efforts are taken to diminish those risks. During this phase, a crisis management plan is formed and a crisis management team is established. In addition to this, spokesperson training is given and pre-draft messages are planned. Also, communication channels are identified or established. The purpose of making a crisis management plan is to have some guidelines and references to what should be done in a crisis

situation. It can include necessary forms or contact information for example. The crisis management team comprises of representatives from different departments and fields. For example, the team may include a legal counselor, an HR representative and a person responsible for public relations. The team members are assigned to different tasks depending on the crisis management plan. (Coombs, 2007a) highlights that both the crisis management plan and the crisis management team should be regularly tested and evaluated, in order for them to work accordingly in time of crisis. The pre-crisis stage also includes the training of members of an organization on how to deal with media. Spokesperson training is required for the representatives of the organization to be able to answer question related to the crisis, without worsening the situation.

Creating pre-draft messages that can be used in the case of a crisis is another step that can be taken during the pre-crisis phase. Creating pre-draft messages, or templates, that can be filled according to the nature of a crisis save time in amidst a crisis. The pre-drafts can be formed by the cooperation of public relations and a legal counselor, of which the latter approves of them. Appropriate communication channels are chosen during the pre-crisis phase. A communication channel can be, for example, an Intranet or the organization's public website. Choosing which kind of communication channels to use depends on the nature of the crisis and the decision of who should know and what should they know.

The second stage of crisis management is crisis response, which comprises of the initial response and of the reputation repair and behavioral intentions. This stage focuses on action taken when an organization faces a crisis and includes the strong involvement of public relations. The initial response to a crisis is advised to be quick, accurate and consistent. (Coombs, 2007a) The pre-crisis stage and the plans made during that stage can help the organization to respond quickly. It is important for the organization to respond to the crisis immediately, especially when considering the media. If the organization does not come forward and provide information, the news media or other people outside the organization will usually fill the void. The other benefit of reacting quickly to a crisis is that it creates an image of control and trustworthiness. Accuracy and consistency during the initial response go hand in hand. Giving incorrect information

requires correcting it, which then can lead to an image of inconsistency and incompetence. If false information is given, it must be corrected. When a crisis happens, it is unlikely that only one person has to answer questions regarding the crisis, and that is why training a spokesperson beforehand is highly important for the organization. In case the crisis threatens the public and public safety, accuracy and a fast respond are even more important, as well as communicating with the public. There is also one additional step which is suggested to be included in the guidelines of initial response to a crisis. (Coombs, 2007a) It concerns addressing the victims of the crisis. Victims may include employees, their families or the public, and may have suffered financial losses or physical trauma. Addressing the victims and their families may help in trying to save the organization's reputation. In incidents, where the injuries are serious or even deadly, offering counseling and support for the victims and their families is also part of crisis management. A crisis usually always has an impact on the reputation of an organization, and thus, reputation repair and the strategies to do that are important for crisis management. Reputation repair can be part of both crisis response and the post-crisis stage, however, in some cases it might not be needed if crisis response has been conducted successfully.

During the post-crisis stage, the crisis has passed or at least it is mostly over. The post-crisis stage may include reputation repair or it may not. The post-crisis stage usually still involves communication with the media, employees or customers. How to keep those involved up-to-date about what is being done to recover from the crisis will depend on the type of the crisis and the type of the organization, as well as the crisis management plan and strategy. (Coombs, 2007a) According to (Coombs, 2007a) the post-crisis stage is also important for the organization itself as well as for the theory of crisis management. It is important for the crisis manager and the crisis management team to review how the crisis was handled, what was done right and what could be improved.

Steven Fink compares crises to a disease and uses medical terms in defining the four stages of crises. He was one of the first to conceptualize crises in such a way and his approach to crisis management helped in familiarizing the concept of staged approaches. Fink considers crises to be dynamic and changeable by nature, and he also believes crises can lead to institutional and

social change. The four stages of Fink's model are prodromal, acute, chronic and resolution. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) The prodromal stage, a medical term, refers to warning signs that can be detected before a crisis strikes, similar to symptoms before an illness. Fink suggested that when these warning signs are detected and understood, yet this might not always be possible, the crisis is more manageable or can even be prevented. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) Thus, identifying warning signs that may lead to crises and acting on them requires crisis managers to be proactive. Successful detection of these signs allows the managers to have more control over the crisis by being able to minimize risks and plan ahead. The second stage in Fink's model is the acute stage, which refers to the eruption of a crisis. Fink suggests that crisis type determines the speed of a crisis. The extent and duration of the crisis on the other hand, are dependent of the procedures followed during the prodromal stage. The crisis can be attempted to be controlled by strategic crisis communication, for example, by focusing on the content, tone or timing of a press release for instance. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

The chronic stage is the third stage of the model. According to Fink, the chronic stage may last for years or even for decades. Healing, reconstruction and self-analysis and doubt are some of the main functions of this stage. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) The chronic stage can be seen as an extension of attempting to resolve the crisis after the acute stage is over. The chronic stage can be seen as the aftermath of a crisis, focusing on dealing with issues that linger long after a crisis has passed. The final stage of the model is resolution. The resolution stage marks the end of the crisis and that the stakeholders are not affected by it anymore. Fink argues the main objective of crisis management is to reach the resolution stage, and thus reaching the resolution stage is an indication of successful crisis communication. Getting to the final stage, however, can be indefinite in time, as the length of the chronic stage can vary and take years. However, taking appropriate action during the prodromal stage can help in reaching the resolution stage faster. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

Some differences can be found between Fink's four-stage model and Coombs' three stage model. The three-stage model offers a simplistic view on the stages of crises whereas Fink uses different terminology and has an additional stage. Moreover, the medical terminology Fink uses and his

view of crisis and the stages of crises being comparable to an illness differ significantly from Coombs' division of the stages of crisis. The most notable difference, however, is the difference between the pre-crisis stage and the prodromal stage. Fink emphasizes the difference between the prodromal stage and the pre-crisis stage by suggesting that whereas the pre-crisis stage can only be detected after a crisis has happened, the prodromal stage can already be detected before a crisis erupts (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). During the prodromal stage symptoms, or warning signs, can become evident through monitoring and thus, they can be addressed by crisis managers accordingly.

The pre-crisis stage and the prodromal stage, as well as the post-crisis stage and the resolution stage are parallel. The crisis stage defined by Coombs, however, entails both the acute and chronic stages of Fink's four-stage model. Whereas Fink makes a distinction between the acute stage, referring to the eruption of a crisis and the application of crisis communication strategies, and the chronic stage which may last for years, Coombs' stage of crisis changes to the post-crisis stage once the crisis has been resolved. (Coombs, 2015a) The post-crisis stage can be argued to contain elements of the chronic stage, such as reconstruction and healing, thus challenging the clear-cut comparison of the two models in question. Fink's resolution stage ends the crisis with lingering issues already being solved during the chronic stage, whereas Coombs' post-crisis stage may still include self-analysis and follow-up procedures. Also, Coombs' three-stage approach does not take into consideration the lingering effects of a crisis that Fink's view of the chronic stage represents, further emphasizing the difference between the views of the crisis being resolved according to the two development models.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Scholars have long recognized the important role communication plays in effective crisis management. Communication decisions can make a vital difference in how the public perceives the organization during and after the crisis (Hale, Dulek, & Hale, 2005; Sapriel, 2003). (Falkenheimer and Heide, 2006) state that "risk and crisis communication are the core of public relations practice and theory".

Crisis communication is an integral part of crisis management. It plays a role in preserving and re-establishing an organization's reputation as well as in informing the stakeholders of a crisis, both during and after the crisis. A crisis creates the need for information and through crisis communication, information and knowledge are refined and shared (Coombs, 2010a). Organizational crisis communication messages play a vital role in crisis situations; they provide information for those affected by the crisis and assist in reducing the damage and impact of the crisis on the organization (Coombs, 2010c; Fediuk et al., 2010). Crisis communication operates in a unique environment due to the immediate risk of significant loss, time pressure, and stress (Hale et al., 2005). (Heath, 2010) points out that "the best-communicated crisis is the one that puts things right the most quickly and ethically".

Crisis communication and the methods used to communicate have an impact on the organization's reputation and survival as well as on people affected by the crisis. Crisis communication may save an organizations image or it can worsen it. Also, improper communication in time of a crisis may even put the public or employees in danger. The main goals of crisis communication are to provide information about the crisis as quickly and accurately as possible. Transparency and taking responsibility in managing a crisis are important in the process of crisis communication. (IATA, 2014) Crisis communication can be seen to serve as a crisis management tool that has many purposes and functions in the different stages of crises. Thus, crisis communication can be seen as an ongoing process starting from the preparation for crises continuing to the overcoming of a crisis and learning from it.

Crisis communication before, during, and after a crisis is priceless among the stake holders to activate solution. Communication of crisis situations may consist of several aspects. (Ogrizek and Guillery, 1999) suggest, "Crisis communication consists basically of a set of concepts, principles, analysis, and working methods that apply specially to the very particular situation known as crisis". In this, they are suggesting that a crisis is a specific event and that there is a type of communication suitable for such an event.

THEORIES ON CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Different crisis communication theories exist and they offer different strategies on how to plan and implement crisis communication. Theories on crisis communication concentrate on the messages and meaning construction that surround unexpected, crisis events (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). Different theories emphasize different outcomes of crisis communication and they represent different ways of dealing with crises. (Liu and Fraustino, 2014: 543) suggest that existing crisis communication theories can be divided into three categories. They are the image-making crisis communication theories, resilience generating crisis communication theories, and the complexity-understanding crisis communication theories. These theoretical approaches entail different crisis communication theories that provide different ways of understanding and dealing with crises through communication.

The prevailing theories on crisis communication concentrate on reputation and image repair. These theories focus on saving an organization's image and protecting its reputation, and thus protecting it from other negative effects of a crisis. These image-making theories include the widely used Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) introduced by Coombs and image repair theory. On the other hand, resilience generating crisis theories concentrate on how to move on from a crisis. Discourse of renewal for instance does not focus on image repair, but rather on recovering from a crisis together with the public. Complexity-understanding theories include theories such as the chaos theory and the complexity theory, which emphasize the intricate nature of crises.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) focuses on maintaining and rebuilding the reputation of an organization that has faced a crisis, and how the public perceives the organization and its handling of a crisis situation (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). SCCT is based on the attribution theory, which suggests that when sudden, negative events occur, people tend to look for reasons to explain them. Individuals look for someone or something to hold accountable for the events, and they react to these events emotionally, of which sympathy and anger are the main emotion according to attribution theory. The level of responsibility attributed on an

organization by individuals for example, will define whether it will be faced with sympathy or anger. (Coombs, 2007b)

According to (Coombs, 2007b) SCCT aims to evaluate the possible damage a crisis has on an organization's reputation and based on those predictions provide crisis response strategies to maintain the reputation of the organization. Thus, the crisis communication strategy an organization decides to use should be based on the reputational assets of the organization and also on the type of crisis it is facing.

According to (Coombs, 2015b), understanding the effect a crisis has on an organization contributes to more successful crisis communication. Coombs uses the study of situational factors to identify how a crisis affects an organization. Crisis responsibility, competence and integrity, long-term and short-term threat assessment and timing are four major categories used to represent the impact of a crisis on an organization. (Coombs, 2015b) By examining these different factors more carefully and how an organization can be negatively affected by a crisis, suitable crisis communication strategies can be formed and applied.

The concept of crisis responsibility comes from the attribution theory. Attribution theory focuses on how people perceive and feel about others in a situation of failure or success (Malle, 2011). In the context of organizations and crises, attribution theory refers to the level of negative feelings directed towards an organization. Thus, an organization is more negatively affected if its stakeholders, for example employees or customers, think that the organization should bear more crisis responsibility. In this instance, this may affect the organization's reputation in a negative way. Competence and integrity is another situational factor that can be used to understand how an organization can be negatively affected by a crisis. Studies show that violations concerning integrity are perceived graver than those concerning competence. Therefore, if an organization's integrity has been affected by a crisis rather than its competence, it may affect the organization more negatively. Also, strategies on how to deal with competence or integrity based crises differ. A crisis and its effects on an organization can be also assessed by the longitude of the crisis. Long-term and short-term threat assessment allows the magnitude of the crisis to be evaluated

and also how it can be handled and how it may affect the organization. Timing is the last of the four situational factors being discussed. Timing in this context signifies the time an organization takes to provide information about the crisis. It is highly beneficial for an organization to be the first to acknowledge and provide information about a crisis. By being the first to provide information about a crisis may reduce the risk of damages on the reputation of the organization, as it might in a situation where, for example, the media was the first to report about the crisis. (Coombs, 2015b) Particularly as the media often tends to sensationalize organizational crises and try to place the blame on the organization in question.

Crisis response strategies provide frameworks for an organization and crisis management to respond to a crisis. Crisis response strategies are thus part of crisis communication, mostly focusing on managing meaning. In crisis response, three groups of strategies can be identified. They are instructing information, adjusting information and reputation repair. The strategy of instructing information aims to protect anyone involved in the crisis from physical harm. Adjusting information aims to give support and inform those affected by the crisis, and thus help them cope with the crisis and offer sympathy. (Coombs, 2015b) Reputation repair on the other hand concentrates on communication aimed to protect or improve an organization's image. Reputation repair, as discussed earlier, focuses on saving the reputation of an organization. Reputation repair as a strategy can be divided into four subsequent categories: denial, redress, bolstering and reducing offensiveness. If denial is used as a strategy of reputation repair, the organization states that it is not responsible for the crisis and should not be affiliated with it. On the contrary, using redress as a strategy aims to avoid negative image of the organization by positive efforts towards the victims of the crisis. For example, giving compensations for the victims or apologizing and thus claiming responsibility for the crisis can help to achieve that. Bolstering also aims for a more positive reaction to the company by using information that portrays the organization in a more positive light. The strategy of reducing offensiveness is less frequently used by organizations. This strategy undermines the extent of the crisis and only claims partial responsibility. (Coombs, 2015b)

Discourse of Renewal Theory

Unlike crisis communication theories based on image repair and protecting one's reputation, discourse of renewal theory focuses on post-crisis communication emphasizing organizational renewal and overcoming the crisis. (Ulmer, Seeger and Sellnow, 2007) identify four characteristics of renewal which will be discussed next. The discourse of renewal emphasizes the role of leaders and their importance in creating and communicating renewal. Thus, the characteristics of a leader and his or her ability to inspire are an important part in the communication of renewal as well as execution. When the emphasis is on renewal and moving on from a crisis, the leader often represents the organization and its values. An appreciated leader can influence the opinions of the stakeholders more easily, as well as gain trust and reliability. (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2007)

The aim of renewal discourse is not to be strategic, but to respond to an incident naturally and rapidly. The focus is not on saving the company and protecting its reputation, but to encourage renewal and progression. It is one of the four main aspects of communicating renewal and it also leans on the competence of the leader of the organization. (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2007) Another important aspect of renewal is that its aim is to look forward, rather than in the past. The focus is on how the incident will be overcome and how to proceed from it, in contrary to image restoration where the communication is explanatory and focuses on what has happened and why. As renewal is more concentrated on the future, the nature of renewal is also based on positivity, of which without looking ahead might be more difficult. A leader with a positive outlook can see a way out of the crisis, by also improving and even benefiting from the crisis. Crises can teach an organization to do something differently, for example to change practices and to improve safety issues. As an optimistic approach, the model of renewal allows an organization to look at what can be done better after the crisis and whether there is room for new opportunities following a crisis. (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2007)

Chaos theory

The chaos theory provides a view on how complex systems, such as organizations, behave and how crises affect them. The theory emphasizes the unpredictability and nonlinearity of complex

organizations as well as their dynamic nature. Sensitive dependence on initial conditions, also known as the butterfly effect, is an essential part of the chaos theory. The butterfly effect refers to the phenomena when even small changes or differences can have a profound effect on a system, for example, on an organization or a crisis. Thus, the outcome of a crisis is strongly dependent on its initial conditions. The chaos theory suggests that making accurate predictions about the outcomes of a crisis is highly unlikely, if not impossible, due to their chaotic and dynamic nature. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) According to the chaos theory, organizations that are complex, non-linear and dependent on other systems, or organizations, are more vulnerable to crises. These kinds of complex organizations, which are common in today's societies, are more prone to experience uncertainty. Crises themselves are considered to radically disrupt the structure and character of an organization. However, the chaos theory suggests that with disruption self-organization emerges. (Seeger and Sellnow, 2013) describe it as a natural process that is driven by an innate pull towards order and form. The process of re-structuring and self-organization can even lead to a new, better-structured organization that allows organizations not only to overcome the crisis but to rise from it.

Communication is seen to have two functions in the chaos theory. First, communication may function as a variant that causes larger changes in a system, and in some cases those changes can even lead to a crisis. Changes in communication process may also worsen the crisis outcome. Secondly, communication may function as a tool for self-organization as well as a tool for organizational renewal. Communication can help in reorganizing and restructuring as well as creating new relationships and connections. Social media is an example of that, when in the time of crisis many resort to social networking sites, such as Facebook, to re-connect as well as look for support. Thus, communications through social networking sites can help in revitalizing communities. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

PHASES AND FUNCTIONS OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis communication and its functions can be divided into different stages. However, how to divide the steps of crisis communication varies. For instance, the functions of crisis

communication can be divided according to the three stages of crisis: pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis. Theory on Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC), however, describes crisis communication as a five-step process, including additional phases such as maintenance and evaluation (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013). The five-step model of crisis communication consists of the following phases: pre-crisis, initial, maintenance, resolution and evaluation. The pre-crisis phase, as its name suggests, focuses on improving preparedness and providing information about potential risks. This phase also allows planning and testing of messages, as well as the systems used for communication in a crisis. The initial phase refers to the initial stages of an event, or a crisis. The purpose of communication during this phase is to provide information and messages of self-efficacy and reassurance, and to reduce uncertainty. Communication should be fast and accurate and aimed at both those affected by the crisis as well as the public. Communication in the maintenance phase continues to send messages of reassurance and self-efficacy. During this phase, communication can also focus on addressing rumors or correcting false facts. Increasing understanding of the ongoing crisis and risks is an important task of communication during this stage too. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013) The resolution phase concentrates on providing the public with information about the causes of the crisis as well as its resolution. The resolution phase can increase the understanding of risks and also how to minimize those risks in the future. The evaluation phase, as its name suggests, evaluates the actions taken to handle the crisis. Communication during this phase is directed at those handling crisis communications and those who responded to the crisis, rather than then public. During this phase, the effectiveness of the communication plan can be discussed along with ideas how it can be improved. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

Applying crisis communication to the three-stage model of crises allows the categorizing of several different communicative functions into only three stages of communication. Coombs' model is simple and provides a more of a general view on the different functions and aims of crisis communication. The CERC model, though, covers different functions in more detail and draws clearer difference between the different stages of crisis communication, such as maintenance and evaluation, which in the three-stage model would fall under crisis response and post-crisis communication. Due to its simplicity and generality, Coombs' stages of crisis

communication are easy to apply to different crises and cases, and other crisis communication theories can be easily juxtaposed with it. When differentiation is important and the stages and functions of crisis of crisis communication want to be studied, other theories may prove to be more beneficial.

During the pre-crisis stage, it is important for organizations to monitor their environment and detect possible risks. The purpose of communication during this stage is also to build relationships with stakeholders, which can prove to be crucial when moving on from a crisis. In crisis response, communication can be used to provide information and give out warnings, for instance. This stage may include dissemination of information as well as collaboration with stakeholders. During the crisis resolution stage, communication is used for reputation repair or discourse of renewal, depending on the communication strategy an organization has decided to use. Communication can also be used to show support, as well as grief and empathy for example. As for organizational learning, communication can help in rebuilding relationships as well as create understanding and knowledge. At this stage, it also allows a dialogue between an organization and the public, which during the crisis may have been difficult to accomplish. (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013)

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter has evaluated and discussed the selected research methods and illustrates the data collection methods used in this research project. The discovered gaps were investigated through content analysis and in-depth interview research methods, aimed to contribute to answering the research questions. Finally the procedures for content analysis of the results and the procedures for in-depth interview were discussed.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A mixed-method approach, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, was selected in order to provide a broader, complementary picture of the subject and answer the research questions. The quantitative data collection focuses on crisis communication research on integrated master plan using publication on newspaper. The qualitative data allowed access to the perspectives and standpoints of practitioners working in the research area, answering the research questions about pre-crisis plan, media usage, organizational cultural influence on crisis communication, applicability of crisis communication strategies, and stakeholder relevance or consideration in crisis communication. The mixed-method approach was utilized to provide a better understanding of the crisis and increase reliability and validity of the findings. The two main data collection methods employed were content analysis and in-depth interviews.

Content Analysis

A content analysis is a systematic, valid, and reliable method used to evaluate specific media content (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002; Weber, 1990). For this study, a content analysis was employed using five newspapers to evaluate government's response to the integrated master plan crisis, as well as to evaluate the topics addressed alongside the crisis.

According to (Bryman, 2008), the coding process is an important element of content analysis. To guarantee correct coding procedures, clear instructions, clarity about the unit of analysis, and categories which do not overlap and cover all the possibilities, have to be considered when designing a coding scheme.

Sample Inclusion Rules and Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was newspaper articles found in Reporter, Fortune, Capital, Addis Zemen, and Berissa. Articles that were published over the course of the crisis period were selected for analysis. The Reporter was selected for this study as it is one of the largest circulated newspapers printed both in Amharic and English language. Fortune and Capital are also well circulated newspaper selected for analysis. Addis Zemen is one of the oldest newspapers printed and circulated throughout the country. Berissa was selected for analysis as it represents a newspaper from a region directly affected by the crisis and for its proximity. Berissa was sought in order to capture how citizens of the region were impacted by the crisis and governments response. In order to obtain the final sample, relevance was determined, with all irrelevant articles excluded. Irrelevant articles included those newspapers with content that was not related to the study and guiding research questions and with no government response. The final sample for this content analysis was comprised of 58 articles.

Coding Instrument and Definitions of Variables

In order to answer the research questions and conduct this study, a coding technique using tally marks was utilized. After the news paper was read, tally marks are put against the topic addressed. Revisions were made after the coding of each newspaper to check its validity and consistency.

“Topics addressed” was created as a variable in order to determine the purpose of each article, as well as the scope of information being covered by the newspapers in regard to the integrated master plan crisis and government’s response. Categories for this variable included: lack of inclusiveness, lost of lives , property damaged, infrastructure development, waste treatment facilities and land fill sites, reasonable compensation fees, lack of good governance, rent seeking problem, protest against the master plan, implementation of integrated master plan should be decided by Oromo people, Command post(state of emergency), land grab, transparency problem, no awareness creation , Oromia special interest from Addis Ababa, peaceful request , anti peace group, impact of social media aggravating crisis using negative information, unproportional power utilization, and displacement. These variables were considered relevant because some of the variables like lack of inclusiveness, Oromia special interest from Addis

Ababa are the causes for the strike and the remaining are the outcomes after the government announces the integrated master plan.

Another variable tested in this content analysis was government's response/PR strategies employed. This is the principal purpose of this study and serves as the basis of the fundamental research questions guiding this content analysis. In order to determine if government responded effectively or unethically during the crisis, response strategies were measured. This variable included various crisis communication strategies, both ethical and unethical, that could have been employed by government and serves to identify which ones government actually utilized. Based on the response government chose to employ, conclusions can be made about how effectively government responded to the crisis. Categories for this variable included: attack of the accuser, denial, compensation, evasion of responsibility, minimization, timely response, acknowledgement of mistakes, expressing concern and sympathy for impacted, and updating the public or stakeholders on the situation.

Related to the previous variable, the presence of unethical crisis management or communication practices was examined. For the purpose of this study, attack of the accuser, denial, evasion of responsibility, and minimization were considered unethical practices. Meanwhile, timely response, compensation, acknowledgment of mistakes, expressing concern and sympathy for impact, and updating the public or stakeholders on the situation were deemed ethical practices.

The Interviews

In-depth interviews were used to explore specific issues in the area of crisis communication from the practitioners' point of view. The advantage of this method is its ability to obtain subjective information from participants and provide information regarding their feelings, values, attitudes, and beliefs (Stewart, 2002).

Interviews are generally used in conducting qualitative research, in which the researcher is interested in collecting "facts", or gaining insights into or understanding of opinions, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviors, or predictions (Rowley, 2012). In order to gain more detailed

insight into the crisis communication of Oromia regional state researcher chose interviews as most adequate method that could grant new information and generate new insight into this matter. All of the interviewees have communication as a part of their job description and duties in Oromia communication affairs and are part of the upper management. Being part of upper management interviewees are exposed to most important issues relevant for the companies they work for and as such were able to provide first-hand information or answers to question asked.

Interview Procedure

Eight semi-structured in-depth-interviews with public relations practitioners from Oromia Communication Affairs Bureau have been performed to increase the understanding of pre crisis plan, cultural influences, the applicability of crisis communication strategies, media employed, and the consideration of stakeholders. The interviewees were chosen through purposive sampling by their experience in crisis communication, their position (senior management level), and availability. The researcher was advised of the interview participants through contact persons at the Oromia Communication Bureau Public Relations officer. The membership at the Public Relations Bureau was seen as an indicator for increasing the validity of the findings, as the membership implies working within a certain code of ethics.

An additional factor for the enhancement of validity was the choice of candidates at senior level, as work at that level requires a significant amount of work experience. Eight interviewees were seen as an appropriate representation of public relations practitioners. The interviews consisted of open and closed questions. Introduction questions were used to gain background information, whereas the open, semi-structured questions were used to explore issues in more depth and to discuss specific aspects of crisis communication. The interviewees were asked the same set of questions, although additional sub-questions (follow-up, specifying, probing, interpreting questions) were added. The planned duration for an interview was thirty to forty-five minutes for each interviewee and four of them were conducted face-to-face and the remaining four were conducted through telephone. The interviews were recorded with a recording device, afterwards transcribed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This chapter evaluates the findings of the content analysis and in-depth interviews. The findings are divided into the two different research methods and research areas. The content analysis provides the general overview over crisis communication, while the in-depth interviews investigate media utilization, manual of crisis communication plan, cultural influences, strategy applicability, and stakeholder consideration.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

For the content analysis, five newspapers were studied and compared in order to determine their description of integrated master plan crisis, responses to the crisis, and if such responses were effective and ethical. The nature of media coverage, topics addressed in articles, government response strategies in the Reporter, Fortune, Capital, Addis Zemen, and Barissa news paper were used for guiding content analysis.

General Results on Media Coverage

In the final sample, 20.7 percent (12) of the 58 articles were from Reporter, 6.8 percent (4) of the articles were from Fortune, 13.7 percent (8) of the articles were from Capital, 8.6 percent (5) of the articles were from Addis Zemen, and 50 percent (29) were from Barissa. All articles were from 11 May 2015 to 06 April 2018.

Topics Addressed

The economic and social importance of the new integrated master plan was the topic addressed most frequently in articles examined, in the year 2015. The benefits the draft master plan will bring to the transition from agriculture to industrialized economy were explained. Its advantages on diversified economic activity and better infrastructure availability (like road, water, electricity and telecoms), and services like fire brigade, schools, and hospitals were discussed. The topics generally include its economic, social and political importance once the integrated master plan is in place. Meanwhile, topics about criticising government's plan to implement the master plan arise from a variety of social groups; students, opposition parties, and communities.

After the crisis began, the most frequently addressed topic in the articles in terms of all possible topics that were mentioned in articles were protest against the master plan occurring in 29.31 percent (17) of the articles. Loss of lives and property damaged were the second most frequently addressed topic and each were present in 25.86 percent (15) of the 58 articles. Land grab, lack of good governance, and rent seeking problem were the third most frequently addressed topic and each were present in 20.68 percent (12) of the 58 articles. Transparency problem and problem of awareness were the fourth most frequently addressed topic and each were present in 18.96 percent (11) of the 58 articles. Command post (state of emergency) was the fifth frequently addressed topic and it was presented in 17.24 percent (10) of the articles. Peaceful request and un-proportional power utilization were covered 15.52 percent (9) of the articles. Social media aggravates the crisis using negative information covered 15.52 percent (9) of the articles. Displacement of people was occurring in 13.79 percent (8) of the articles. Anti peace group was occurring in 13.79 percent (8) of the articles. The integrated master plan could help infrastructure development for the capital city and surrounding towns was another addressed topic considered in 13.79 percent (8) of the articles. Per capita income increase, road construction, hospital, and schools are recurring themes under this topic. Compensation to individuals impacted by the conflict was addressed in 13.79 percent (8) of the articles. Implementation of Integrated master plan should be decided by Oromo people was another topic covered 12.07 percent (7) of the articles. Lack of inclusiveness was found in the 12.07 percent (7) of the articles. Un-fulfillment of Oromia special interest from AA covered 12.07 percent (7) of the articles. Waste treatment facilities and land fill sites were also addressed topics dealt in 8.62 percent (5) of the articles. See Table (1) below for frequencies.

Topic Addressed in Article:	Number of Articles Topic Addressed In:
lack of inclusiveness	7 (12.07 percent)
Loss of lives	15 (25.86 percent)
property damaged	15(25.86 percent)
Infrastructure development	8 (13.79 percent)
waste treatment facilities and land fill sites	5 (8.62 percent)
reasonable compensation fees	8 (13.79 percent)
lack of good governance	12 (20.68 percent)
rent seeking problem	12(20.68 percent)
Protest against the master plan	17(29.31 percent)
Implementation of Integrated master plan should be decided by Oromo people	7 (12.07 percent)
Command post(state of emergency)	10 (17.24 percent)
Land grab	12 (20.68 percent)
Transparency problem	11(18.96 percent)
No awareness creation	11(18.96 percent)
Oromia special interest from AA	7 (12.07 percent)
Peaceful request	9 (15.52 percent)
Anti peace group	8 (13.79 percent)
Social media aggravating crisis using negative information	9 (15.52 percent)
Un-proportional power utilization	9 (15.52 percent)
Displacement	8 (13.79 percent)

Table 1 Topic Addressed in Articles

Government's Response/PR Strategies Employed

Results pertaining to government's response and crisis management strategies reveal that government employed effective and ethical crisis communication practices more often than unethical strategies. In 17.24 percent (10) of the articles government timely responded and in 8.62 percent (5) of the articles acknowledges Mistakes. Compensation was the third most frequently occurring crisis management strategy employed by government and was present in 6.89 percent (4) of the articles. In 3.44 percent (2) of the articles the government updated the public on the situation, and in 1.72 percent (1) of the articles expresses sympathy and concern for impacted people.

Crisis management strategies considered unethical were less apparent in the articles, with attack of the accuser by government found in 10.35 percent (6) of the articles. Minimization, evasion of responsibility, and denial were the other unethical practices employed by government, yet were found in a low percentage of articles with 3.44 percent, 1.72 percent, and 1.72 percent respectively. Examples of evasion of responsibility found in the sample of articles included is pointing finger on anti peace group. Overall, unethical responses or crisis management strategies were employed by government in 17.24 percent (10) articles, with government employing tactics and practices deemed effective and ethical in 37.93 percent (22) of the articles. See Table (2) below for frequencies.

Government's response/PR strategies employed:	Reporter	Fortune	Capital	Addis Zemen	Barissa	Total
Attack of accuser	1	0	2	1	2	6 (10.35%)
Denial	0	0	1	0	0	1 (1.72%)
Compensation	0	0	0	0	4	4 (6.89%)
Evasion of responsibility	0	0	1	0	0	1 (1.72%)
Minimization	0	1	0	0	1	2 (3.44%)
Timely response	0	0	0	0	10	10 (17.24%)
Acknowledgment of Mistakes	0	0	0	0	5	5(8.62%)
Expressing sympathy and concern for impact	0	0	0	0	1	1 (1.72%)
Updating the public or stakeholders of the situation/recovery efforts		1	1	0	0	2 (3.44%)

Table 2 Government's Response to the Crisis

INTERVIEWS

The eight in-depth interviews were conducted with Oromia communications bureau public relations practitioners. The interview schedule was structured into five parts: background information, Crisis communication plan/manual, Strategy applicability, influence of organizational culture on crisis communication, Media consideration, and Stakeholder's consideration.

Background information

The background section included questions about personal background such as years of work experience, number of crisis cases participated on, differences between general PR and crisis communication, and the interviewees' definition of crisis.

In the personal background section the interviewees were coded based on interview dates and prefixed with I (interviewee) in order to keep their names confidential. The numbers 1 to 8 stand for the order of the interview dates, 1 for the first interview 8 for the last. All of the interview candidates were male (I1 through I8). One of the interviewees had 36 years of experience (I2), one of the interviewees had 18 years of experience (I8), one of the interviewees had 17 years of experience (I5), one of the interviewees had 13 years of experience (I4), two of the interviewees had 9 years of experience (I1 and I3), one of the interviewees had 5 years of experience (I6), one of the interviewees had 2 years of experience (I7). One of the interviewees was head of Oromia government communication affairs bureau, two of the interviewees were team leaders, one of the interviewees was senior media affairs professional, one of interviewees was head of zone communication office, one of the interviewees was deputy head of zone communication office, two of the interviewees were head of woreda communication office. All of the interviewees have worked in other organizations (I1 through I8). One of the interviewees (I4) worked on estimated 7 crises cases, three of the interviewees (I1, I2, and I3) worked on about 6 crises cases, three of the interviewees (I5, I6, and I8) worked on estimated 5 crises cases, one (I7) only 2 cases. See Summary of background information in Table 3.

Code	Gender	Work experience (years)	Position	Estimated Crisis case handled
I1	M	9	Capacity building team leader	6
I2	M	36	Media development team leader	6
I3	M	9	Media affairs senior expert	6
I4	M	13	Head of zone communication	7
I5	M	17	Deputy head zone communication	5
I6	M	5	Head of Woreda communication	5
I7	M	2	Head of Woreda communication	2
I8	M	18	Head of Oromia State communication	7

Table 3: Interviewees' Personal Backgrounds

Differences between general PR and crisis communication

All of the interviewees stated that the main differences between general PR and crisis communication were mostly seen in the urgency of the situation. During crisis the communication is time-critical. One of the interviewees (I8) stated: during crisis PR will consider every possibility and capacity to address the issue. Nothing is postponed for tomorrow unlike general PR. General PR is common sense day to day communication and stakeholder engagement. General PR communicates, but the communication is not necessarily time-critical. One of the interviewees (I2) stated that crisis communication is totally time-critical and it has to be rapid, it has to be effective in addressing community concerns, and it has to clearly state

action the company is taking to address the problem. The other interview (I3) said general PR works for good communication between the organization and its stakeholders. Whereas crisis communication working on sudden issues that may have negative impact on people and environment. Interviewees (I8) further stated that although both are concerned with reputation, general PR is planned and structured and is not subject to the same conditions as crisis communication, which is a very specialized high pressure communication, often based on limited information. PR should facilitate two way communications and he/she should be ambassador for his/her organization. PR should prioritize its public, should have its own policy, action, whatever is publicized to the public should be changed to practice, and should be a good communicator and a good listener. PR should a counselor for the management.

Definitions of crisis

They defined crises as natural and man made events which pose a threat to an organization's business, product, reputation, and financial position. Interviewee (I8) stated that crisis is bad, unwanted, suddenly appearing natural or man made event with or without sign beforehand. Interviewees (I1, I2, and I3) have explained that crisis can be caused by political complaints, conflicts arisen due to breach of human rights, border issues. Interviewees (I4, I5, and I8) have explained that crisis can be caused by natural cases like, flood, drought, epidemics, and conflict between different ethnic groups.

Crisis Communication Plan of Oromia communication bureau

Oromia communication has no crisis communication plan. The trend is whenever crisis happened concerned professionals come together to set a committee that will follow the situation.

Response strategies

All the interviewees agree that response strategies employed during crisis are not in accordance to the science. Interviewee (I8) further explains that mostly there is no spokesperson assigned who is responsible to communicate to the public. Because of this long delay happens on looking for responsible person to communicate the issue. There is also fear to provide information

because of responsibility. I8 explains that sometimes providing information will be conditional because of who should give the information. For example at the time of state of emergency it is not clearly identified who should give information. Because of this communication of information to the public delays unnecessarily. Because of fear, some issues need further investigation before communicating to the public.

Crisis communication in Oromia vs. other regions

All the interviewees agree that crisis situation was high in Oromia region compared to other regions of the federal government in the study years. As Oromia is vast compared to other regions crisis case due to natural and human crisis are more compared to others. I8 further explain that Oromia and Amhara regions have better crisis management because of crisis were high in these regions.

Challenges in the management of crisis via communication

The challenge as most interviewees respond, it is difficult to obtain complete and true information concerning the crisis is a major challenge. This challenge in turn creates fear to communicate effectively with the public. Two of the interviewees (I3 and I5) highlighted poor internal communication culture as a challenge in the management of crisis via communication. If their communication is not very good, the departments do not cooperate well. Two of the interviewees (I1 and I4) stated that degree in which communication flows between different organizational levels impact crisis management. How well an organization is managed usually dictates how well they manage crisis situations.

Level of effectiveness of crisis communication

All the interviewees except (I1) responded that crisis communication was not effective in the region. Crises are not easily controlled due to communications made using different media. Social media especially Facebook was utilized by protesters to aggravate the situation which made the communication strategy ineffective. One of the interviewees (I2) stated that since there is no openness and transparency to the public, crisis communication was not effective most of the time. (I8) stated that some groups who are against the government will use any crisis

condition to aggravate it using social media which makes crisis communication difficult.

Effect of culture on crisis communication

The term culture in this research work is to mean organizational culture. Question included was about the effects of organizational cultures on crisis communication. Most interviewees except (I4) indicated that organizational culture has a certain effect on crisis communication. As interviewees (I8) stated organizational culture has significant role in crisis communication. He stated that organizational culture is one of the most critical things that can work for or against a company in a crisis. We hide or minimize crisis condition assuming it may entail other problems. You will be victim, and isolated when you provide true information. The consequence will be worst once the crisis is surfaced by other media. As interviewee (I7) communicating the truth may lead to accountability. Because of this mostly the actual truth is not communicated. Interviewee (I6) further explained that our culture promotes concealing information, minimization, and undermining the demand of publics. Shifting responsibility is another common cultural problem stated by one interviewee (I2).

Media consideration in crisis communication

All sorts of media including electronic, print, and social media are utilized in crisis communication. One of the interviewee (I1) stated that social media especially Facebook facilitated better information exchange. One of the interviewee (I2) stated that information is not equally provided to all media. Since electronic media is accountable we provide full information to it. On the other hand there is no accountability in social media and mostly information is distorted and therefore we had reservation in providing information through social media. One of the interviewee (I6) stated that we use exclusively radio to reach the rural areas. All interviewees agree that social media is powerful both for good and bad. (I8) stated that previously TV, radio, press, and social media were used in the stated order but nowadays social media comes in the first row for communication. Since social media helps to easily get public opinion it is good to use it as a first choice.

Relevance of stakeholder perspective in every day work

The interviewees, when asked about the importance of the stakeholder perspective, all were in agreement with each other and stated that the stakeholder perspective is absolutely vital, critically important and the main focus of their work. One of the interviewee (I8) stated that stakeholder perspective would be certainly very relevant in practice as it could be used as a useful instrument to measure the practical efforts of the crisis communicators, to find out which messages are most credible and trustworthy, and to show if people think the organization and the crisis communicators have done enough. He further stated that from the stakeholder side they do not acknowledge PR practitioners. But, as interviewee (I6) stated, our communication is not strong enough to know what the stakeholders think. Interviewee (I4) stated that most of the time the public respond negatively to the crisis communication effort.

Stakeholder reactions and check tools

To measure stakeholder reactions all of the interviewees used more or less the same tools, such as telephone or online media and social media, especially Facebook, as a helpful test of opinion. It is important to see what bloggers are saying, Twitter comments, and what is up on Facebook, because these are real people talking about a company and it is happening live minute by minute. Monitoring of what people are saying or thinking about how the organization is responding to the crisis is very important and something we take very seriously.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This thesis study explains crisis communication practices employed by government on the crisis occurred due to the new integrated master plan and analyzed crisis communication in action. This crisis is unique in regard to its length and scope because most crises are one time incidents that are short-lived; however, the integrated master plan crisis was an ongoing crisis spanning across a three year period. This is important to recognize as crisis communication responses had to remain continuous, as well as did efforts to maintain favorable public perception. The findings of this chapter are divided into the two categories of content analysis and in-depth interviews. The following discussion is based on the guiding research questions which aimed to provide an overview of crisis communication and analyze specific aspects of crisis communication.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Nature of Media Coverage

Media coverage of a crisis plays an important role in the public's perception of the organization involved, as well as its management of the crisis. Regarding the first research question related to media coverage of the integrated master plan crisis, a good deal of coverage was given to the crisis throughout the period in which it occurred. This was expected because during the crisis time lives were lost, properties were damaged, people were displaced, and such events has power to capture the attention of media. In the study, it was found out that each year the crisis and government's response received media coverage, with the largest number of articles published in 2016 (25 articles/ 58articles). The majority of articles, 29 of the 58 articles (50.0 percent), were from Berissa, this was expected, because it is a newspaper prepared in Afan Oromo language and its proximity.

Topics Addressed in Media Coverage

Regarding research question two, the four frequently addressed article topics in the media were protest against the master plan in different areas in Oromia region (29.31 percent/ 58 articles), government's response (55.17 percent/ 58 articles), lost of lives and property damage (25.86 percent/ 58 articles), and land grab (20.68 percent / 58 articles). This reveals that topics considered most important by newspaper editors, and therefore, those receiving more media

coverage, were related to the strike and government's response in terms of both action and comments to the crisis. This is not surprising as the public desires for quick and successful action to be taken, as well as to be well-informed of recovery efforts from those involved. Additionally, the crisis situation is considered serious when it claims human life and definitely captures media attention. Concerning land grab it is expected because the people of Oromo assume that the new integrated master plan is aiming to take portions of the land from the region to incorporate it to the capital. Therefore, it is obvious to seek media attention.

Rent seeking features and lack of good governance are the fifth addressed topics in the articles with 18.96 percent (11) of the total 58 articles. This is of no surprise as these are interrelated issues that aggravate the crisis. The state of emergency was a topic addressed in 17.24 percent (10) of the 58 articles. This is also clear that after the proclamation of the state of emergency questions started demanding to lift the state of emergency which in effect will again seek media attention. Peaceful request and un-proportional power utilization are topics addressed in 12 and 9 articles respectively. These topics are raised in accordance to command post that was established after the state of emergency. Displacement of people, Anti peace group, Social media contribution as a topic were each found in 8 articles. Anti peace group using social media to spread hate speech was the cause for displacement of people. The integrated master plan could help infrastructure development for the capital city and the surrounding towns were considered in 13.8 percent (8) of the 58 articles. Per capita income increase, road construction, hospital, and schools are recurring themes under this topic. This is not of surprise because the government has to use every means to persuade the public to implement its plan. Lack of inclusiveness, Lack of transparency, and lack of awareness are other topics that were found in the 7 of the articles. These are interrelated topics that contribute for the crisis to extend. Implementation of integrated master plan should be decided by Oromo people and un-fulfillment of Oromia special interest from Addis Ababa were topics found in 7 of the articles. This is no surprise because people want to have ownership and decision power on cases that concern them. Waste treatment facilities and land fill sites were another topics dealt in 8.6 percent (5) of the 58 articles. This result is expected because there was a great fear among the people that waste will be dumped in the outskirts towns in their areas which risks their health.

Government's Response Employed during the Crisis

Related to research question three regarding government's efforts to respond to the crisis, results revealed that government employed both ethical and unethical crisis management strategies, yet more of the strategies executed by government were ethical and demonstrated effective crisis communication. Overall, unethical responses or crisis management strategies were employed by government in 17.24 percent (10) articles, with government employing tactics and practices deemed effective and ethical in 37.93 percent (22) of the articles.

Of these ethical practices, in 17.24 percent (10) of the articles government timely responded and in 8.62 percent (5) of the articles acknowledges mistakes. These two response strategies denote responsibility, concern, and admittance of the impact caused by the crisis. It also shows respect for its stakeholders/publics. These responses are also considered effective crisis management according to scholarly research as they serve to notify, develop, and maintain positive public perception of the organization, its actions, and its reputation during the time of a crisis. Compensation was the third most frequently occurring PR and crisis management strategy employed by government and was present in 6.89 percent (4) of the articles. This reveals that government acknowledged the impact that the crisis directly had upon individuals and businesses, as well as expressed willingness to take action to repay or repair damage caused to such individuals and organizations. It was expected that government would compensate individuals personally injured or those businesses sustaining damaging losses as compensation is an ethical act displaying responsibility in a crisis situation in which an organization is involved. In 3.44 percent (2) of the articles the government updated the public on the situation, and in 1.72 percent (1) of the articles expresses sympathy and concern for impacted people. This is also shows the concern, responsibility, and feeling to its public and helps to maintain positive relationship.

Unethical Crisis Response Strategies Employed by government

While only a small percentage of the 10 articles examined for this study were found to contain unethical crisis management strategies (17.24 percent/ 54 articles), it is still important to note that during the course of the crisis, government did engage in some degree of behavior that is

considered unethical. Regarding research question four, of these unethical practices, attack of the accuser (10.355 percent 6 articles), minimization (3.44 percent 2 articles), evasion of responsibility(1.72 percent 1 article), and denial (1.72 percent 1 article) were unethical practices employed by government. This type of behavior was not surprising as the unexpected nature of a crisis can catch an organization unprepared. In such occasions when the pressure is high from the public, it is often easier to put blame on others. This happens frequently during the time of crisis in most organization because it is simpler and less risky strategy for a company to follow.

INTERVIEW

The aim of this research project was to evaluate specific issues in crisis communication, using in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of background information, Crisis communication plan/manual, communication strategies employed in the different phases of the crisis, the crisis communication strategy success, media consideration, influence of organizational culture in crisis communication, and Stakeholder's consideration.

Background information

Interviewees have years of experience ranging from 2 years to 36 years. All of them have worked in different organizations. The interviewees have worked on estimated crisis cases ranging from 2 cases to 10 cases.

Crisis communication and general PR

Falkenheimer and Heide state that “public relations show its main value when organizations face risks, uncertainty, or suffer from crisis” and that “risk and crisis communication is the core of public relations practice and theory” (Falkenheimer and Heide, 2006). As Hale et al. (2005) highlight, crisis communication happens in a unique environment due to the immediate risk of significant loss, time pressure, and stress.

The responses obtained during the interview indicated that crisis management and crisis communication are very specific areas of work and set apart in many aspects from general public

relations work. As stated by all interviewees: the main differences between crisis communication and general PR are apparently in the urgency and necessity to communicate rapidly. Crisis communication was defined as serious, time-critical, high communication on which the reputation, finances, and often the continued existence of an organization depend. Whereas, a general PR is a long-term planned and structured day to day communication and stakeholder engagement.

Crisis definition

They defined crises as natural and man made events which pose a threat to an organization's business, product, reputation, and financial position, which is in accordance with scholars' definition. A real crisis "requires immediate response from the organization in order to prevent significant reputational or financial damage" (I3).

Crisis Communication Plan

Oromia communication bureau has no crisis communication plan. The occurrence of crisis dictates concerned professionals to come together and set a committee to follow the situation. This has negative impact because potential problems could be easily changed to crisis since there is no one responsible handling the case.

Response strategies

Most of the time the strategies employed during crisis in the region can be categorized into minimization, evasion of responsibility, attack of accuser, and denial.

Crisis communication in Oromia vs. other regions

Basically crisis communications are similar to other regions which are expected as crisis communications are universal. What is concluded unlike other regions is crisis happens frequently in Oromia region than others. This can be due to large population and vast area coverage.

Level of effectiveness of crisis communication

Crisis communication in Oromia region is considered ineffective. This attributed as most interviewees stated to social media. Crises were not easily managed due to negative and false information disseminated through social media that could easily aggravate the situation which made the communication strategy ineffective. Lack of transparency and openness equally contribute to its ineffectiveness.

Challenges in the management of crisis via communication

The challenge as most interviewees respond, it is difficult to obtain complete and true information concerning the crisis is a major challenge. This challenge in turn creates fear to communicate effectively with the public. Internal communication culture is also another challenge. The degree in which communication flows between different organizational levels also contributes to the challenge.

Effects of organizational culture on crisis communication

Organizational culture can be a predictor of crisis, as it reflects the organizations' perspective on issues such as safety and the handling of problems. It also provides information about the organization's ability to identify possible threats and communicate with its stakeholders and the media (Hutchins & Wang, 2008). Pearson and Mitroff (1993) proposed that among other, organizational culture and structure are the factors which influence crisis events in organizations. Taylor (2010) added that these factors influence the public relations messages more than the individual skills of communication experts. She stated that one of the reasons for organizational crisis is often a lack of communication and connection between organizational units, which can lead to the inability to recognize threats and interpret crucial information. This is in agreement with the finding which states that truth is not communicated and crisis events were hidden from the public.

Sapriel (2003) explained that most business crises are non-event related and mostly originated in management inaction or neglect. Bechler (1995) backed this observation up by pointing out that the role of leadership is most important for organizational crisis handling as well as

communication networks, especially those responsible for communication between internal and external audiences. Gregory (2008) emphasized that the organizational communication in a crisis often reflects the overall organizational culture and its communication ability, which does not improve during a crisis. This is also in agreement to the response that effects depend how well an organization is managed and how well communication flows within the organization itself. Culture has a significant influence in our organization because transparency, honesty, and consistency are less valued in our culture.

Media consideration in crisis communication

All sorts of media were employed in crisis communication. Although all sorts of media were utilized the way information supplied to different media is different. Full information is supplied to dependable and accountable media whereas others receive portion of it. Exclusively radio is used to reach the rural areas.

Relevance of stakeholder perspective in every day work

The safety of its stakeholders should be first priority for organizations and come before concerns for reputation and finances (Coombs, 2007b; 2009; Falkenheimer & Heide, 2010). This is in agreement that all interviewees stated that stakeholders are seen as enormously vital and important.

Stakeholder reaction check

To monitor stakeholder reactions to crisis response strategies, the interviewees used a variety of tools. The contributions are in line with the literature which suggests that telephone, email systems, internet and intranet should be used to communicate consistent messages and to observe stakeholder reactions (Nikolaev, 2010; Massey & Larsen, 2006; Stephens & Malone, 2010). Sapriel (2003) stressed that communicating with stakeholders is only half of the job; listening to them to ensure the internal view mirrors the external is as important. Another tool to scrutinize stakeholder reactions are social media which are increasingly important, as one of the interviewees indicated “these are real people talking about a company and its happening live minute by minute” (I2). Stephens and Malone (2010) noted that the availability of new media has

expanded the organizations options for communicating in crisis and social media are accepted tools for establishing dialogue with stakeholders. Coombs (2008), in addition, saw social media not only as a useful tool during a crisis, but also as a way to identify developing crises in the pre-crisis phase and to examine stakeholder perceptions of organizational responses in the post-crisis phase.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

Crisis management and communications is an essential aspect of public relations that can determine the overall success or failure of an organization. The ability for an organization to respond quickly and effectively during a crisis is imperative to repairing and protecting its reputation among the public.

Crisis management and communication has emerged as an important field in public relations as crises are inevitable and effective management of such crises is crucial to the longevity of an organization. The process of crisis communication is comprised of three main stages: pre-crisis planning, crisis management during the time of a crisis, and post-crisis evaluation and learning. Preparation for a crisis is an integral aspect of effective crisis communication and is comprised of developing a crisis management plan, as well as monitoring for and training individuals within the organization how to respond to potential crises. Crisis management during the actual crisis is highly complex and includes quick and decisive, yet thoughtful action. There are various strategies and tactics that can be employed by an organization in crisis, some of which are ethical and some of which are unethical. In order to repair and protect an organization's reputation among stakeholders, it is in an organization's best interest to respond in a timely and ethical manner. Post-crisis evaluation takes place after a crisis is deemed resolved and involves reflection on behalf of the organization on their crisis management decisions, skills, and responses. This stage also serves as a tool for learning for an organization, as effective and ineffective crisis management responses are detected and adjusted for future potential crises.

This study examined the crisis due to integrated master plan and government's efforts to manage the crisis. In order to evaluate the government's crisis management strategies that it chose to employ during the integrated master plan crisis were effective and ethical, a content analysis was conducted. Additionally in order to determine crisis communication plan/manual, communication strategies employed in the different phases of the crisis, the effectiveness of crisis communication strategy, media usage, influence of organizational culture in crisis

communication, and stakeholder's consideration in-depth interviews were conducted with eight participants with public relation practitioners.

Major findings from the content analysis revealed that government primarily employed crisis management response strategies considered ethical, such as updating the public in a clear, concise manner, a majority of the time taking all the responsibility itself. There were also some instances where government engaged in unethical strategies during the crisis. These unethical responses were accusing the accuser, denial, and evasion of responsibility.

Major findings from the in-depth interview revealed

- The importance of utilization of different media
- The influence of organizational culture on crisis management and communication.
- The role of stakeholders was considered from an organization's perspective where stakeholders were seen purely as receivers of organizational messages.

RECOMMENDATION

One of the important aspects lacked by the Oromia State Government Communications Affairs Bureau was pre-crisis communication manual. One of the components in pre-crisis is preparation for a crisis which is an integral aspect of effective crisis communication. It would help to search the environment to look for issues which can potentially change into crisis. So early stage identification could help to solve or lessen the consequence. Also it helps to select and train individuals within the organization how to respond to potential crises in advance. It also helps to select in advance and train the spokesperson to communicate effectively. Therefore Oromia state communication affairs bureau should prepare its pre-crisis manual to benefit from it.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined what constitutes ethical and effective crisis communication and examined crisis communication in the context of government's integrated master plan. While this study revealed a lot about media's interpretation of the integrated master plan, we do not know if the news coverage had any effects on people's perceptions of the government. Future research may

consider public opinion about Government, in light of how it handled the integrated master plan crisis. Public perceptions will reveal more accurately the overall effectiveness of government's crisis management efforts. Research from the stakeholder perspective would have great relevance as it would give practitioners the possibility to assess public relations practitioners and organizations efforts from the receiver perspective.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Information Form

Crisis communication: A Case Study of the integrated master plan crisis

My name is Minale Gebeyehu. I am currently enrolled in the MA Programme in PR and Strategic Communication in School of journalism and communications at Addis Ababa University. To complete the degree I have to conduct a research work and write a thesis.

The aim of my project is to find out how the organization efforts to manage a crisis and to protect, restore, and maintain its reputation among the public. By taking part in this research project, you will be helping me to understand how crisis communication in practice is in your organization.

I would like to interview you and talk about:

- What crisis communication if at all did Oromia Communication Office have before the crisis
- What strategies were employed in the different phases of the crisis
- What media were used in the management of the crisis communication
- What was the relative importance of the different media employed
- What were the challenges in the management of the crisis via communication
- What was the level of effectiveness of the crisis communication
- How stakeholders are considered in crisis communication in your experience

Your interview will take about 30 to 45 minutes and we will meet at a place agreed upon earlier. I will, with your permission, audiotape the interviews and transcribe them later. All features that could identify you will be removed and the tapes used will be erased once the transcription is done. If you agree to participate, the interview questions will be sent to you two weeks in advance to give you enough time for preparation.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. All information collected from you will be stored on my personal computer which is a password protected and stored in my computer for five years and can only be accessed by me and my advisor.

Please contact me if you have any concerns about the project, via email (miheretminale@yahoo.com) or phone (+251 911 141864). You may also contact my supervisors at Addis Ababa University. My Advisor is Dr. Ammanuel Geberu, email@..... phone +251-911-

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Crisis communication: A Case Study of the integrated master plan crisis

Interview Questions

Background information

How many years have you worked?

Have you worked in other organizations than Oromia communication bureau?

How many crisis cases have you worked on?

What are the main differences between crisis communication and general PR?

How would you define crisis?

Crisis communication plan/manual

Does the organization have pre- crisis communication plan?

If yes what components are included in the plan?

Strategy in action

What strategies were employed in the different phases of the crisis?

Do internationally successful strategies work in Oromia? How?

Crisis communication and management

Does crisis communication in Oromia differ from other regions?

What were the challenges in the management of the crisis via communication?

What was the level of effectiveness of the crisis communication?

Does the bureau culture have effect on crisis communication?

Media consideration

What media were used in the management of the crisis communication?

What was the relative importance of the different media employed?

Stakeholder's consideration

How important is the stakeholder perspective in your every day work?

Do you have ways to check how stakeholders react to crisis response strategies?

Appendix C: Content Analysis

Crisis communication: A Case Study of the integrated master plan crisis

Questions guiding content analysis

Media coverage

What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response in Reporter news papers?

What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response in Capital news papers?

What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response in Fortune news papers?

What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response in Addis Zemen news papers?

What was the nature of media coverage, in terms of government's response to the integrated master plan crisis response in Berissa news papers?

Main topics addressed

What were the topics addressed in the articles about the integrated master plan crisis and government's crisis response within the Reporter, Capital, Fortune, Addis Zemen, and Berissa?

Response Strategy

What response strategies did government engage in during different stages of the crisis?

Did government engage in unethical crisis communication?

What are the most frequently used unethical strategies?