INFLUENCES OF PERCEIVED CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES ON ORGANIZATIONAL REPUTATION: A CASE OF SOLAI DAM TRAGEDY IN KENYA

By

PROTUS AKWABI MURUNGA

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Communication in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirement for the Degree of Master of
Arts in Communication Studies

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY–AFRICA

Summer 2019
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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University in Nairobi for academic credit.

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In accordance with United States International University – Africa policies, this thesis is accepted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Communication Studies.

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Dedication
To God almighty, on whose wings I have soared high beyond my expectations. My pillar, my wisdom, my strength, and the source of my inspiration. Also, to all those who thirst for knowledge for intellectual nourishment and also to use it to change the world.
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SCCT Situational Crisis Communication Theory

WHO: World Health Organization

EA: East Africa

Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED

ADSR: Annual Disaster Statistical Review

UN: United Nations

USA: United States of America

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNOCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

NDOC: National Disaster Operations Centre

KHRC: Kenya Human Rights Commission

OPR: Organization-Public Relations
Abstract
The role of crisis response strategies in protecting organization reputation is not in doubt. Crisis response strategies, or what an organization says and does after a crisis hits, are very crucial in safeguarding the legitimacy of an organization as well as protect the stakeholders from further harm. The application of these strategies is anchored on the level of attribution of crisis responsibility or simply the level of blame stakeholders attribute to an organization. Solai dam tragedy was a crisis that was preventable but there was an alleged ignorance of the calls of leaking dam walls before they broke in what the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) called those responsible ignored calls about the leaking walls. The government was held responsible because of the unaddressed reports concerning the warnings about the leaking dam walls. This placed the government in a precarious position and thus it had to defend itself as a responsive government with the interests of the citizens at heart. The findings indicate that the government applied apology, compensation, and corrective action. However, these strategies did not help protect its reputation since the level of attribution of crisis responsibility was so high which required full apology in order to vitiate any negative stakeholder perception. The components of apology which include expression of sympathy, compensation and corrective action are very important in cushioning an organization against negative stakeholder behavior. However, accepting responsibility is very important for an organization to be seen to be caring for its stakeholders. In the present study, the findings indicated that the failure by the government to accept responsibility negatively affected its reputational standing. Research has shown that accepting responsibility is a very important step in reducing negative stakeholder perception.
1.0 CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.2 Introduction

A crisis is a “a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both financial and reputational threat” (Coombs, 2007, p. 164). In crisis situations, the uncertainties caused by the crisis greatly threaten the organization and its most important expectancies. As a matter of fact, crises can hurt stakeholders physically, emotionally, mentally, and financially and the reactions can range from negative word-of-mouth to cutting purchase intentions to even having a negative reputational view of an organization (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Indeed, such reactions can dim stakeholder perception of an organization (Coombs, 2007).

Often, crises are caused by disasters. Disasters are occurrences that befall countries regardless of geographical location, development matrix or any other consideration. Significant societal happenings like terrorist attacks as well as natural disasters affect individual thoughts, attitudes, opinion and feelings. In the wake of disasters, people react with emotional decisions whose consequences mostly become catastrophic (Lerner et al., 2003). Globally, people are at risk of being affected by natural disasters and the consequences of these attacks can be devastating.

Floods are attributed to a number of factors and are of various kinds: Flash floods, coastal floods, and river floods. Relatedly, they may occur due to human interruptions or
interventions of watersheds, flood plains and drainage areas. In Kenya, the main cause of floods is torrential rainfall affecting mostly Tana River, Western and Nyanza areas.

Despite these documented regular occurrences of disasters and crises in poor and marginalized countries (many of them in Africa), a review of literature indicates that there exists limited scholarly work on how the affected organizations communicate to the public during the crises. Effective crisis communication by the affected organization is critical in mitigating further damage to reputation of the organization as well as the stakeholders. The proposed study aims at examining the influences of perceived crisis response strategies on stakeholder perception of organizational reputation.

According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED, 2014), a disaster can be defined as a situation that is beyond the response of local capacity, which requires or calls for either national or international help. Additionally, it is an abrupt and an unanticipated event that causes so much damage as well as human affliction. Furthermore, disasters can be divided into technological and natural. Technological disasters are disasters due to technological miss-happenings, while natural disasters are believed to be due to the hand of God.

The Annual Disaster Statistical Review (2013) has further categorized disasters into various subgroups: Geophysical disasters are events that originate from solid earth, and which include earthquakes, and Volcanic eruptions. All these are packaged as mass movement of dry earth. Meteorological disasters are events occasioned by short-lived to medium level weather conditions whose timeframe ranges from minutes to days. Examples include storms and other mass movement of wet atmospheric processes. Climatological
disasters are events that last long and range from seasonal to even decades. They encompass situations of extreme weather conditions like droughts, and fires. Biological disasters are situations where living organisms are exposed to unfavorable conditions with germs, poisonous conditions, stampede from animals and insect attack. Hydrological disasters, which encompasses the gist of this research, are situations in which there is interruptions in the movement of water cycle which sometimes is caused by strong wind set-up.

Arguably, floods have caused more damage to both human and property than any other natural disaster in the world (Biswas & Tortajada, 2016). The United Nations report (2016) documented that in a 20-year period between 1995-2015, approximately 157,000 people died due to floods and close to 2.4 billion others affected globally. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED, 2014) documented that in 2013, the impact of natural disasters globally caused the death of approximately 21,610 people, 96.5 million others became victims of these unfortunate events and further left close to US$ 118.6 billion in damages. The countries that were worst hit by these natural disasters include Philippines, China, United States of America, Indonesia, and India and Siera Leon, all accounting for 34.2% of global disaster happenings.

Globally, Asia recorded the highest percentage in the aftermath of these miss-happenings. Hierarchically, Asia had 47%, USA 22.4%, Africa 5.1% and Oceania 3.3%. In Africa, hydrological disasters accounted for 77.3%, meteorological disasters 13.6%, and climatological disasters 9.1%. Furthermore, the damages accruing from these disasters always go beyond the capacity of most African and other third world countries. For instance, in Niger, 6 floods accounted for US$64 million, Kenya US$36 million,

Additionally, the Annual Disaster Statistical Review, (2013) documented that the current global average annual floods index estimated a loss of $104 billion with China bearing the highest brunt, followed closely by USA and India. Among the 10 most damaging and costly floods in the world, China has witnessed three of the most devastating with very high fatalities. These have been attributed to increased population, topography, urbanization, as well as growing economy. Flooding has been a recurrent menace in China and this has resulted in loss of life and immeasurable damage to property. In mid-2016, the devastating floods caused the death of approximately 440 people, 100 still unaccounted for, displacing 33 million others in eight provinces and $22 billion in damages.

On Friday, 25th January 2019, a dam belonging to an iron ore mining company operated by a minerals firm Vale collapsed expelling huge volumes of sludge sweeping away close to 84 people while close to 276 others still missing in Brazil. The dam belonging to Córrego do Feijão mine in Brumadinho sits in the same neighborhood with the 2015 dam that raptured and killed 19 people.

In 2015, still in Brazil, a dam in Mariana collapsed killing around 300 people, displacing many others and destroying property worth millions. Reports indicated that “corporate greed” and the “omission and inefficiency “of the Brazilian government were solely to blame for the 2015 dam disaster in the same area, Mariana. The two dam crises have been described as preventable by environmentalists saying they are not "natural disasters," but "political-institutional failures." This is because of the declarations
publicly about the stability of the dam few days before its break. Further, a periodic review of the dam in June and September 2018 reported of a dam that was in stable condition. Although those responsible for the mishap have been arrested, questions still linger concerning the construction of dams and their safety.

In Africa, hydrological disasters or disasters related to droughts are the second highest after climatological disasters impacting on more than 1.5 million people. Floods in various parts of the continent like South Sudan, Sudan, Mozambique, Niger, and Senegal resulted in 71% of victims from hydrological disasters. In Siera Leone, on 15 August 2017, a landslide in a rural area in the Western part of the country caused a major flooding in which close to 6000 people were affected. The once busy settlement with booming economy was thrown into destruction as houses and people were whisked away in their numbers. The overall human cost of the failure of the government to implement housing policies and guidelines was witnessed as it was documented as a repeat of the 1945 floods in the same place that killed as much and caused more damage.

In Kenya, just like other parts of the world, the mention of floods elicits negative feelings because of the historical architecture of these torrents and their effects on humanity. The main causes of flooding have been conceptualized to be terrestrial rainfall which have made people living in low laying areas to move to higher grounds. In Budalangi, Western Kenya for instance, the history of floods is replete with deaths and destruction of property which has been a scourge every year without a solution from the political leadership. A report by the United Nations Development Programme, (2014) states that the record of Kenya’s floods documents 1961-62 and 1997-8 as the years in which the country witnessed the worst floods ever. These two scenarios were occasioned
by the famous El Niño, an interruption of the ocean-atmosphere process affecting most tropical pacific areas and affected the whole world. The disequilibrium of the weather patterns caused both floods and droughts depending on the geographical location.

In mid-2018, reports by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the National Disaster Operations Centre (NDOC) documented the heavy rainfall witnessed across the country precipitated flooding in which 186 people died and lose to 800,000 others affected (UNOCHA, 2018; NDOC, 2018). These were followed by the Solai dam tragedy in Nakuru County in which a dam broke its walls and the raging waters swept away people and their houses leading to the death of more than 47 people and destruction of property.

1.2 Background to the study

On the 9th May 2018, at around 7.15 p.m. one of the eight dams located in Solai, Nakuru County, burst its banks draining down close to 190 million liters of water and sweeping away everything including people, their homes and all the social amenities the village depended on including schools, hospitals and even places of worship (Mburu, 2018). More than 47 people lost their lives, mostly children, women, and the elderly during the disaster, and many more gruesome injuries, physical and mental were witnessed. Nearly the whole village of Solai was displaced in the wake of the disaster. Besides enormous environmental destruction, property worth millions of shillings was recorded too have been destroyed (KHRC, 2018).

The government was blamed for not doing much in what was termed as the worst human-made disasters and the most glaring cases of corporate impunity and state
negligence. Solai dam is a private dam owned by Perry Mansukh and according to Wanja, (2018), the businessman owns and manages eight other dams in the area without the requisite permits. In retrospect, the government, in a bid to repair its image, promised to support the victims to get back on their footing. In his defense, Perry Mansukh, the owner of the collapsed dam, blamed the heavy rainfall that had caused the level waters to rise and eventually break the walls of the dam.

According to the multi-agency report released by the Ministry of Interior and the Coordination of National Government, Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Water, the location and positioning of the dam posed great danger to the Solai village and this was one of the key reasons the dam broke its banks. In an interview with the locals, the Standard newspaper (Mkawale, 2018) was informed that the dam started leaking way back in 2016, reports were relayed to the relevant authorities but nothing had been done. The Kenya Human Rights Commission report documented that the Solai tragedy could have been avoided had the warning reports been attended to. The commission through it’s Executive Director said that initial reports of imminent risks associated with the dam were ignored by those responsible (KHRC, 2018). This tragedy is reminiscent of other dam tragedies that have happened across the world.

Globally, dam tragedies reminiscent of the Solai one are not new. In Brazil, Samarco dam owned by Brazilian mining company collapsed in 2015 and the overflowing raging waters swept away the former beautiful town and its inhabitants. The aftermath of this was the death of 24 people, destruction of property and displacing many others. Just like the Solai case, reports indicated that the dam owners were warned of the dangers inherent but ignored them (Philips, 2015). In July 2018, a dam under construction in Laos,
Southeast Asia, broke its walls and gushing waters killed 26 people, displaced close to 6600 while many more still unaccounted for.

In 2015, still in Brazil, a dam in Mariana collapsed killing around 300 people, displacing many others and destroying property worth millions. Reports indicated that “corporate greed” and the “omission and inefficiency “of the Brazilian government were solely to blame for the 2015 dam disaster in the same area, Mariana. The two dams have been described as preventable by to environmentalists saying they are not "natural disasters," but "political-institutional failures." This is because of the declarations publicly about the stability of the dam few days before the break of the dam. Further, a periodic review of the dam in June and September 2018 reported of a dam that was in stable condition. Although those responsible for the mishap have been arrested, questions still linger concerning the construction of dams and their safety.

Sudan’s torrential rains in 2016 led to the death of approximately 100 people and affecting close to 100,000 others. The flooding which started at night swept away mostly children and elderly women and almost 8000 households in Khartoum. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, overall, the flooding has affected slightly over 122,000 and over 13,000 houses destroyed (UNOCHA, 2016).

Disaster preparedness is of critical importance in reducing the loss of life as well as property. Effective disaster management aims to reduce the vagaries of the disaster and encompasses appropriate preparation in relation to organization readiness, communication, as well as the coordination of all other department in accordance with the available resources.
Crisis response strategies determine the success or failure of an organization’s efforts in reputation management and crisis communication. Coombs (2007) averred that the role of crisis response strategies is threefold. First, an effective, appropriate crisis response strategy has to provide instructing information on how stakeholders should protect themselves during the crisis. Second, the communication has to provide adjusting information which encompasses more details on what really happened and help stakeholders deal with the psychological effects of the crisis. At this juncture, it is imperative for these instructing and adjusting messages to be communicated fast and first, consistently, and also in an honest manner (Huang, 2008). Third, the implementation of these response strategies begins with the aim of protecting the reputation (Coombs, 2007; 2013, Coombs & Holladay, 2014).

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides an apt way of knowing how to maximize the reputational protection through the crisis response strategies. This research adopts the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) since it provides a framework for understanding the interplay between the various elements in a crisis situation that inform the attribution of responsibility and the reputational perceptions in the stakeholder’s minds. Further, it will help in the conceptualization of a crisis frame and then applying the most suitable and appropriate crisis response strategy that will be helpful in protecting an organizational reputation as well as matching the crisis type.

Additionally, SCCT conceptualized reputational threat through the lenses of influencers which play a great role in shaping the stakeholder perception. Coombs, (2004b) suggested two intensifying factors which influence the attribution of responsibility: (1) Crisis history (2) Prior reputation. Crisis history describes a situation where the
organization has had or not had crises in the past. A history of crises portends some bad behavior by the organization and this increases the attribution of responsibility for the organization and reflects negatively on the reputation. Prior reputation on the other hand explains the way the organization has been interacting with the stakeholders. Whether the organizational stakeholder relationship has been favorable or unfavorable. If the relationship has been unfavorable the attribution of responsibility will be greater than if the relationship was favorable (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, 2007).

According to Mahon (2002) and Fombrun (1996), reputation is an intangible asset depicting an organization’s previous behavior and describes a firm’s capability to produce important outcomes for stakeholders. How well an organization meets stakeholder’s expectations will define reputation either favorably or unfavorably. In this research, the crisis response strategies that the government of Kenya employed during the Solai dam tragedy determined the perception that stakeholders had of it. Furthermore, since reputation also can be fashioned through the information received from the media, interaction with the organization, or second-hand information from peers (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004), the perceptions in the stakeholder’s minds about the government will be crucial in terms of attracting investments as well as a pool of talented workforce. An organization’s actions will leave an impression in the stakeholder’s minds. The more an organization is perceived responsible for the crisis, the more the damage to the reputation and vice versa.

1.2 Crisis communication and the Kenyan experience

Communication is a very critical component of crisis management which enhances the dissemination of crisis information to aid in saving lives and property. Arguably, research
has shown that for crisis, it is a matter when and not if (Coombs, 2007). In Kenya, for instance, the Doula plane crash on 5 May 2007 has been hailed as a success crisis communication. This is because immediately after the announcement of the missing plane and the subsequent news of its wreckage in the forest, the Kenyan government together with the Cameroonian government through the respective branches of the Red Cross Society provided both instructing and adjusting information. The instructing information was very cardinal in that it those who had lost their loved ones to protect themselves from any other potential harm from the unfolding of the crisis. Further, the adjusting information aimed at helping those whose loved ones has perished in the crash to psychologically cope with the bad news.

On the 5th of May 2005, a Kenya Airways passenger plane carrying close to 115 people crashed in a forest in Southern Cameroon. The Cameroon Red Cross Society (CRCS) reported that no causalities were found after visiting the site of the crash. It was first suspected that the crash was due to bad weather. The Cameroonian and Kenyan governments worked in cohort to set up a crisis committee near the crash site and several humanitarian actors were allocated different roles and responsibilities.

The dusitD2 Hotel terrorist attack on 19th January 2019 was another effort by the Kenya government to demonstrate that indeed crisis preparation is key for successful crisis management. The terrorist attack which left close to 21 people dead has been hailed as better coordinated as compared to the Westgate terrorist attack in September 2013 as well as the Garissa university attack on 3 April 2015. In the dusitD2 hotel attack, there was evidence of coordination among the various multi-agency security team which was deployed. The Kenya Red Cross Society equally seemed prepared due to the fact that
information was generate from one single source and relayed to the relevant publics. Due to the domestication of social media, the agency provided both instructing and adjusting information to help vitiate against further damage to the public as well as property and help them cope with the psychological effects of the attack like trauma on their social media pages and constantly updated them.

In crisis situations, the salience of crisis information cannot be doubted. Information concerning how the public is to protect themselves from being hurt and how they can cope psychologically with the effects of the crisis is very critical. In the Dusit D2 attack, information emanating from different agencies was similar and this defined the success of the response.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

“An organizational crisis is a specific, sudden, and non-routine event or a series of events that create high degrees of uncertainty and viewed as threatening an organization’s important goals” (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, p. 7. 2011). The threats posed by crises on organizational reputation have an impact on stakeholder perception of the organization (Dowling, 2002). Furthermore, crises have the potential to destabilize an organization’s normal operations and pose both financial and reputational threats. Additionally, crises can harm stakeholders in many ways including both financially, physically and emotionally. When crises befall an organization, they tend to make the stakeholders have an unfavorable perception of the organizational since crises damage the reputation of organizations (Coombs, 2007).
In situations where organizational reputation is threatened or damaged by a crisis, post crisis communication is the panacea to image/reputational repair as well as prevent further damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). Coombs and Holladay (2011) defined crisis communication as the gathering, processing and distribution of information necessary for dealing with the crisis. These crisis response strategies are what the organization says or does after a crisis (Coombs, 2013). A crisis needs fast, effective and appropriate response strategies to mitigate further damage to the reputation of the organization.

Kölking (2014) noted that the presence of evidence, damage, the status of victims as well as organization performance are very crucial for determining stakeholder perception of responsibility because crisis perceptions and crisis response strategies are related concepts. After the Solai dam tragedy, the government through the Ministry of Interior Coordination, the Ministry of Water, and as well as the Ministry of Environment swung in action and took responsibility for the disaster and helped restore normalcy. Specifically, the government adopted compensation, apology, and corrective strategy to try and reduce the offensiveness of the disaster.

The 2004 Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans led to the deaths of approximately 1,464 people while displacing many others and property worth millions destroyed. The reactive response by the government was the main cause of the high number of deaths and this negatively impacted on the government. Scholars of crisis communication who studied the Hurricane Katrina like Chua, Kayna, and Foo, (2007) averred that crises and disaster management will always fail because of poor crisis communication and management. Indeed, the sluggish response to the Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent loss of the government reputation among its citizens was largely blamed on the poor crisis
communication and management by the various government agencies especially during these times of uncertainty (Chua, Kayna, & Foo, 2007)

In Mozambique, the 2017 fierce floods caused the deaths of 135 people being the worst since 2000, more than 200,000 people were affected and destroying close to 200 homes leaving many more homeless. In addition, according to Maputo Municipality damage estimates, property worth US$29 million was destroyed which was the worst since 2000. In its response, the government of Mozambique responded by compensating the victims who had lost everything in the floods and also took full responsibility for the crisis. In light of Coombs, (2010) SCCT theory, the government of Mozambique used apology response strategy as well as ingratiation strategies to remind the public that floods were a natural disaster and that the government itself was a victim.

However, a gap remains on how crisis response strategies influence organizational reputation, particularly when a government is involved. According to Andreassen (1994), governments, just like other organizations, need reputation in order to survive. From an economic point of view, a good reputation is connected to a number of benefits including sustaining existing businesses as well as attracting a pool of others. In this vein, employment is guaranteed while unemployment is muzzled. From a political standpoint, a favorable reputation foregrounds public trust and promote public participation in political processes like elections and referenda, which are equally very crucial for disaster management.

In their analysis of the US government’s failure to adequately and timely respond to the 2004 Hurricane Katrina, Sobel and Leeson (2006) explored and critically ruminated
into the events leading to the tragedy as well as the immediate response by the government. In their study, they used the public choice theory to explain the government failure to respond effectively to the Hurricane Katrina crisis. The main assumption of the public choice theory is that people in public institutions are driven by individual interests. In other words, people will always participate in activities that will accrue benefits that affect them directly - the cost benefit analysis (Buchanan, Tullock, & Olson, 1962).

In their study, they found that there are some inherent aspects that will always impede the actualization of operations especially in the governments. The chief reason herein is the tragedy of the anti-commons. The tragedy of the anti-commons, according to Sobel and Leeson (2006) describes a situation where there are too many decision makers such that the need to have them all be consulted creates delays in making important decisions especially in times of emergencies.

According to Marx Weber (1905), bureaucracy is an apt way of constructing a system of organization since it fosters equal treatment of all stakeholders and the work definition is clear. He further defines bureaucracy as a system of organization embedded in many rules, clear processes, procedures, clearly defined division of labor and responsibility, hierarchical processes all fashioned within an interpersonal communication ethic.

But arguably, this definition can only suffice in organizations that are quite apolitical. Organizations that do not have any political persuasion that may cultivate some biasness due to support or any other benefit. In this regard, since governments are political entities, the concept of bureaucracy defines the structure and processes that are used in
their day to day operations. This explanation is explicitly reminiscent of the Solai dam tragedy in which, arguably, government policy was backspaced by state agency officials who, according to the multi-agency report published by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), intentionally refused to attend to the calls of leaking dam walls. Indeed, the governments are made up of agencies which propagate the vision and missions of the regime. In this regard, the failure of the Kenya government, just as the US government, in responding to the Solai dam tragedy was due to the inherent bureaucracy that is embedded in the pith of governments.

As a matter of fact, since governments are composed of the different agencies that propel the vision and mission of the regime, the fact that they are pregnant with too much government oversight cannot be disputed. This excessive oversight foregrounds the poisonous bureaucracy that impedes proper provision of necessary services to the. The multiple layers of decision making that exist in all positions impede the quick attendance to important matters like emergencies.

At this juncture, the concept of the tragedy of the anti-commons can be operationalized and contextualized herein as the situation where many people have unrestricted access to the dominant coalition of decision making arena with each having overlapping roles that obstructs one another. Governments are political organizations thus any decisions made in any of its agencies have political appendages tied on them. Thus, in crisis situations, decisions to respond are always based on the political leaning of the affected and the potential to gain support in the next plebiscite (Sobel & Leeson, 2006).
In profiling disasters, Sobel and Leeson (2006) averred that governments usually are admonished by the publics due to type one and type two errors. Type-one error is defined as mishaps that result from under cautiousness and are explicit mistakes that carry a lot of negative perceptions from the public than type-two errors. On the other hand, type-two errors are defined as less visible mistakes that may not carry much negative impressions. In attempting to domesticate this, the Solia dam tragedy can be conceptualized as a type-one error since the severity is overt and the views and impressions of government in the minds of the public were more negative than positive.

Since governments are political entities, it is imperative to note that the interests of politicians are never in consonance with the public’s expectations. When a disaster hits, the first action is to trigger an evacuation plan and save lives. Conversely, politicians will endeavor to vouch for re-election and gloss over development efforts by the government even in the eyes of abject maldevelopment. In the allocation of budgets, many may not match the deficiency of resources on the ground but will be in line with what the political class deems appropriate. In the words of Brooks (2011) in the New York Times, Katrina was the most anticipated natural disaster in American history, and still the government failed at every level. This situation is reminiscent of the Solai dam tragedy in Kenya where the government refused to heed to the calls concerning the leaking dam walls which eventually led to deaths, loss of property, and the disruption of life.

According to the SCCT framework, the level of attribution of stakeholder responsibility is a key variable in determining the reputational threat level as well as the crisis response strategies that will be suitable to protect stakeholders and reduce the damage on reputation. In this vein, scholars have argued that in situations where the attribution of
crisis responsibility is high, accommodative crisis responses like apology and compensation are the panacea to reducing stakeholder anger. Contextually the use of apology, compensation, and the promise of corrective action which by the government was timely and appropriate.

Additionally, intentional crises carry an increased attribution of responsibility as compared to other types of crises. As Coombs and Holladay, (2000) argued, organizational reputation is the way stakeholders position an organization in their minds and how it is meeting their expectations. Parson (1956) as cited in Wæraas (2019), noted that organizational legitimacy foregrounds the nexus between the organization’s vision and goals and the societal expectation.

Further, Wæraas (2019) averred that organizational legitimacy is a subjective concept that portends how well an organization is meeting the expectations and perceived values of the society. However, crisis communication in this sense is viewed as the oil that lubricates the squeaky processes of legitimacy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Vaara & Tienari 2008; Golant & Sillince, 2007). In addition, Scholars have also deciphered the importance of organizational legitimacy as compared to organizational reputation (Deephouse & Carter 2005; King & Whetten, 2008; Bitektine, 2011; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

Most research studies have concentrated on how organizations or corporates respond to crises but few have documented this concerning governments responding to crises and how this response affects them and the citizens. According to Rosenthal, (1997), the role of governments in times of crisis and emergencies is very important. When crises
strike, just like other organizations, government authorities face legitimacy questions since it is believed that governments have the wherewithal to deal with any kind of crisis, yet occurrence of crises lays bare the ineffectiveness of government bodies tasked with disaster management (Koumin & Jarman, 1989, 1997).

This study, therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how the use of crisis response strategies affect the perception of stakeholders towards an organization. This study will examine how the Kenyan Government through the ministry of interior coordination, the ministry of water, and the ministry of environment responded to the Solai dam tragedy and how this affected stakeholder perception of government reputation. A positive organizational perception increases an organizational reputation due to the stakeholder expectations being met which in effect strengthens its legitimacy. Research has shown that how an organization responds to a crisis determines the perception the stakeholders will have of the organization’s reputation as well as the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Effective and appropriate crisis response strategy can be the difference between success and failure in crisis communication (White & Brown, 2011). Fearn-Banks (2007) defined organizational reputation as the overall stakeholder assessments or judgements about an organization, thus a positive organization stakeholder relationship will greatly affect how a crisis and the organization is viewed by stakeholders. Crises create uncertainty and destabilize organizational stakeholder relationships (OPR), thus it is prudent to construct a good organization-stakeholder relationship in order to vitiate any negative
stakeholder reaction in case of a crisis and protect an organization’s reputation (Coombs, 2007a; Fearn-Banks, 2007).

Similarly, crises damage organizational reputation and crisis response strategies are meant to aid in reputation protection and recovery based on crisis type (Coombs, 2007a). How an organization responds to a crisis will define the perceptions and judgments of it in the minds of stakeholders. The purpose of this study therefore, is to find out how the perceived crisis response strategies used during the Solai dam tragedy influenced stakeholder perception of government reputation.

In crisis situation, the most important factor to consider when deciding on the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies is the level of attribution of responsibility pegged on an organization. This is because an increase in the degree of attribution of responsibility fatally injures the organizational reputation which requires highly accommodative crisis response strategies like apology and compensation in order to vitiate against any negative stakeholder reaction. Within the same vain, a reduced attribution of crisis responsibility has a very minute influence of organizational reputation which requires less accommodative crisis response strategies like denial. It is thus prudent for crisis managers to critically analyze the crisis situation in order to gauge the crisis type and identify and apply the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies depending on the degree of attribution of crisis responsibility.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

To achieve this purpose, the study will be guided by the following objectives:
(1) To establish the perceived crisis response strategies used by the Kenya government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy.

(2) To find out how these perceived crisis response strategies influenced the public’s perception of the Kenya government reputation.

(3) To investigate how the stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility influenced the Kenya government reputation.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Since crises are quite unpredictable and threaten important expectations of organizations, organizations need to understand how well to respond to crises in order to avoid more damage to their reputations. Coombs, (2007) opined that there is little research on the effects of crisis response strategies on organization’s reputation. Similarly, how stakeholders react to the different crisis response strategies has not been prudently studied. (Ahluwalia et al., 2000; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dean, 2004, Coombs, 2006). Therefore, this study will be significant in documenting how stakeholders react to different crisis response strategies and how these response strategies affect organizational reputation. As Coombs (2006) aptly noted, most crisis communication studies have examined the crisis response strategies without putting in mind the stakeholder perception of these strategies, the crisis, and the organizational reputation. Additionally, this study will add new knowledge in the field of crisis communication through the lens of SCCT.

According to SCCT model, the identification and subsequent selection of effective and appropriate crisis response strategies based on the crisis situation will be very influential in shaping the level attribution of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007b). It is
important to match the crisis response strategies with the crisis type in order to improve reputational protection and few studies have examined this (Jeong, 2009; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2010).

In their study of how the public responded to Samsung Company which caused the Korean Oil spill in 2007, Jeong, (2009) found out that indeed the public has the tendency of making strong internal attributions of responsibility and weak external attribution of responsibility is reduced levels of distinctive information is given out. Additionally, Sisco et al. (2010) examined the crisis response strategies used by the Red Cross and concluded that effective crisis response strategies are well employed if they are matched with the crisis type. These findings are important in helping organizations asses the crisis situations then selecting the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies that will help protect the stakeholders and the reputation.

1.8 Rationale of the Study

Disasters in Kenya, just like other countries, are not new. Early preparation is always crucial to avert more damage both on the people, organizations and property. How organizations respond to crises or disasters play a very big role in determining the way the stakeholders will perceive it. Particularly, how governments respond to disasters and how many lives are saved shape their reputations in the minds of the citizens. The value of this research lies in the fact that assessing the suitability of crisis response strategies with the crisis type is significant in alleviating more damage and also favorable stakeholder reactions.
1.9 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the importance of crisis communication in enhancing a favorable reputation. Having a favorable organizational reputation will help attract customers, investors as well the best pool of talent. This research focuses on Solai dam tragedy in Nakuru County, situated Rift Valley, Kenya in which 47 people lost their lives many more displaced and property destroyed. It is important to understand that floods in Kenya are not new and the way the government has responded to them have played a significant role in assessing disaster preparedness. The Kenya Human Rights Commission documented that the Solai tragedy was due to negligence since warning signs were given but no action was taken (KHRC, 2018). Such crises are rare in Kenya but generally, government relationship with the citizens and also how previous crises have been responded to plays a big role in shaping the citizen’s perception of the governments.

10 Limitation

A major limitation of this study is that getting information from the victims was a bit difficult because they are still affected by the scourge. The mental, psychological, and physical scars are still fresh thus difficult to be sure to get the information required since it reminds them of a painful past.
10.1 Definition of terms

10.1.1 Crisis

According to Fearn-Banks (1996), a crisis is a key occurrence with negative implication affecting an organization, stakeholders, products, services, as well as the good name which disturbs the normal organizational activities.

10.1.2 Crisis Communication

Crisis communication can be defined as the collection, processing, and dissemination of information needed to combat a crisis situation. Crisis communication mainly deals with response strategies, or what the organization does or says after a crisis (Coombs, 2010).

10.1.3 Organizational Reputation.

According to Fombrun and van Riel (1997), organizational reputation is a collective representation of a firm’s past actions and results that describes the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. This definition implores on the fact that the main purpose of an organization is to create value for its shareholders. Additionally, reputation is the results of a competitive process whereby organizations portray their main features to key stakeholders to improve their social standing. These approaches strengthen the fact that both stakeholders will form an opinion about an organization’s reputation.
10.1.3 Crisis Response Strategies

What an organization says or does after a crisis. They are used for reputational repair, minimize negative affect and also curtail negative behavioral intentions (Coombs, 2007, 2013).

11. Chapter summary

Effective and appropriate crisis communication is the panacea for favorable reputation management. The way an organization communicates with its stakeholders will determine how it will be viewed by the stakeholders. During a crisis, organizations have to select response strategies based on the crisis type, crisis history, and relational reputation. Crisis type determines the stakeholder attribution of responsibility on the part of the organization. The higher the attribution of responsibility, the higher the reputational threat and vice versa. Crisis history describes whether or not the organization has similar crises. Relational reputation is the way the organization has been treating its stakeholders. If the treatment was good then they will have a favorable impression of the organization and this will trickle down to reputational mileage.
2. CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses important concepts of the literature review and the theory that informs the foundations upon which the study is anchored. Chief among them is the theoretical framework of the research as well as the literature review. Theoretical framework is an important component of a research in that it explains, predict as well as conceptualizes a phenomenon. Furthermore, theories provide a rationale for proper predictions of the relationships that exists among the independent and dependent variables in the study. Thus, the theoretical framework used in this study will help in ascertaining the interaction between the crisis response strategies and the reputation of the government.

Additionally, this chapter will include a literature review where an examination of different books, scholarly materials, and other relevant sources will be discussed in order to provide a conclusive description of these works in relation to the research problem under investigation. The significance of a literature review also lies in the fact that it helps in improving the research methodology by reviewing the methods used by others, identifying their suitability with the research questions, the pitfalls they faced, and finding the best approach that will answer the research questions (Ormrod, 2007).

Macauley, (2007) opined that literature review also helps in reading widely within the scope of the research, conceptualize the conclusions of others and the theories used, and identifying gaps that exist. Thus, this helps in adding new knowledge through the
conclusions that will be made. This chapter also includes the conceptual framework that will aptly contextualize the relationships between variables that exist in the study.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section describes the theoretical framework for the study which shows the relevance of the topic under study and the theory. Theories in research are important because they aid in providing the rationale for the research problem. In this study, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was adopted because it aptly described how organizational reputation can be maximized by the adoption or effective and appropriate crisis response strategies based on the crisis type. Because this research examines the influence of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation, this theory fits in well.

2.2.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

2.2.1.1 Attribution of Responsibility

Attribution theory holds that in times of a crisis, people will look out for the causes or make attributions (Weiner, 1985; Weiner 1986, 2006). When events happen, emotional reactions will be triggered due to the attributions of responsibility for the cause. The key emotions in the attribution of theory are anger and sympathy which, coupled with attribution of responsibility, will trigger action, either in support of or against the organization. These actions or responses will be favorable or positive when an individual or organization is not deemed as responsible for the crisis and this evokes sympathy in what scholars have referred to as external locus of control. On the other hand, the reactions
will be negative if an individual or organization is deemed responsible for the crisis which produces anger and an increased attribution of responsibility (Weiner, 2006).

In attribution theory, research has shown that the public will always attribute blame on happenings, especially negative or undesirable events (Kelley, 1972; Weiner, 2006, 1986). According to Weiner (2006; 1986), attribution theory is found on the locus of control which is conceptualized as the internal/external that has an effect on people’s behaviors and views, which are stronger if internally perceived and weaker if externally perceived. The rationale for strong and weak perceptions if due to the belief that internal causes are within the organization’s control and external may have been caused by an external agent.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is founded in attribution theory which informs the conceptualization of the relationships among the different variables used in SCCT. In addition, in the SCCT framework, the attribution of responsibility is employed in the assessment of the threats posed to the organizational reputation and use effective and appropriate crisis response strategies that will help in protecting the reputation. Since a crisis is a negative event that leads to attribution of responsibility by the stakeholders, many questions are posed like, “was the crisis due to situational factors or was it possible for the organization to control? Scholars have linked attribution of responsibility with SCCT (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Coombs, 1995; Härtel et al., 1998). In this similar vein, affective outcomes of the organization response may be affected due to the attribution of responsibility by stakeholders (Coombs & Holladay, 2005).
2.2.1.2 Historical Development of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The idea behind SCCT was born in 1995 with the assumption that since crises are negative scenarios, people will attribute responsibility for the crisis which will influence interactions with the organization (Coombs, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Schwarz, 2008). Coombs (1995) designed guidelines for effective adoption and employment of these crisis response strategies and defined crisis response strategies as “a public statement made after a crisis” (p. 147). Suggesting that crisis response strategies are significant tools for crisis managers, Coombs (1995) suggested that the crisis situation is very crucial in the selection of a response strategy that will help in reducing damage and protecting reputation. Further, SCCT focuses on the audience to understand stakeholder perceptions and their behaviors towards the crisis response strategies and the organization. The type of crisis, crisis history, and relational reputation determines these perceptions and their attribution of responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

Basing his assertion in attribution theory, Coombs (2007) posited that the main features of the theory strengthen the importance of crisis communication. Attribution theory assumes that in the wake of negative and sudden events, people will look out for the causes and the judgements made will be made based on stability, locus, and controllability (Coombs, 1995, 2007). In this vein, locus is whether or not the cause of the crisis is external or internal. Stability describes whether the crisis has happened previously or not. Controllability explains whether the crisis was within the control of the actor or not (Coombs, 2007).
Attribution of responsibility is the main pillar upon which SCCT rests. This is because the attributions made, to a large extent, impact on the reputational perceptions and this shapes their behavioral intentions after the crisis. Reputations matter so much for organizations (Dowling, 2002), and a crisis threatens this important organizational asset (Fombrun & van Riel 2004). Although these attributes are very important in assessing the crisis situation, they may vary according to situation which may trigger different requirements. Various factors may lead to more negative stakeholder perception towards an organization: crisis type, crisis history, and relational reputation. The design and subsequent growth of SCCT pays attention to using aspects from attribution theory in responding to different crises (Coombs, 2007a).

According to Coombs and Holladay (2002), SCCT provides a framework for crisis managers to slither through crisis situations. Crisis communication is mainly focused on public as well as reputational protection since crises threaten organizations. Since organizational reputation is an important asset, SCCT suggest a framework for gauging the different stakeholder reactions towards the crisis response strategies through understanding how to exploit the reputational protection afforded by the crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2007a).

Coombs and Holladay (2002) further added that the main assumption of SCCT is that there is a relationship between crisis responsibility and organizational reputation. Crisis responsibility describes the level of attribution of responsibility stakeholders peg on an organization (Coombs, 2004). In this sense, a correlational effect exists between these two variables with decreased attributions resulting in low reputational threats (Coombs, &
Holladay, 1996; 2002; 2006) and an increased attribution of responsibility results in high reputational threats (Coombs, 2004).

SCCT postulates that to protect organizational reputation effectively, the crisis manager has to carefully examine the crisis situation and select the best crisis response strategies based on the crisis type that will protect the reputation as well as enhance the organizational stakeholder relationship. Several factors are responsible for the level of threat on organizational reputation: (1) Initial crisis responsibility, (2) Crisis history (3) Prior relational reputation.

Initial crisis responsibility explains the view of the stakeholders of the organization’s failure to control the crisis (Coombs, 1995; 2007). Research has documented that the more stakeholders attribute responsibility to an organization, the more the reputation gets damaged (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2002, 2004). The type of the crisis affects the crisis responsibility attributed to an organization which is conceptualized as a type of frame which provides a mechanism for how stakeholders should perceive and interpret the crisis. This is because some aspects in the crisis have been made more salient than others thus promoting particular understanding in the audience’s minds (Entman, 1991, 1993). It is significant for the stakeholders to understand the type of a crisis as this determines the level of attribution of responsibility which further shapes the reputational perception (Druckman, 2001; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Stakeholder attribution of responsibility is based on the crisis type which Coombs, (2007) categorized them into clusters: (1) The victim cluster has the lowest attribution of responsibility and include natural disasters, product tampering, rumor, and work place
violence where the organization is also perceived as a victim of the crisis and has very little
effect on reputation. According to An and Gower (2009), organizations that delink
themselves from the crisis situation can best be described as falling in the victim cluster.
(2) Accidental cluster has minimal attribution of responsibility and its effects on reputation
is minimal. This cluster includes technical-error accident, technical-error product harm and
challenge, and the organization does not touch or mention the crisis as well as its attributes
(Claeys et al. 2010). The events within the lens of accidental cluster are perceived
uncontrollable and beyond organizational control. (3) The preventable or intentional
cluster is characterized as placing people at risk deliberately, engaging in inappropriate
activities, or going against the laid down rules regulations. It has the highest attribution of
responsibility and its effects on organizational reputation is highest. They include human-
error accident, human-error product harm and organizational misdeed and as such
stakeholders believe the organization failed to control the events thus was purposeful
(Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Whether the organization has had crises of this type in the past or not describes a
history where according to attribution theory, something is urgently needed to
prevent the occurrence of crises that dent organizational reputation (Martinko et al., 2004).
Prior reputation explains the way the organization has been interacting and treating its
stakeholders previously in other contexts. This relationship may be unhealthy if the
organization’s actions towards its stakeholders has been unpalatable and had no regard for
its stakeholders (Porritt, 2005). Crisis response strategies are significant in protecting
organizational reputation despite the type of crisis. Further, how sophisticated and complex
a crisis becomes determines the type of crisis response strategies to be applied (Coombs 2012).

As Coombs, (2007) averred, crisis response strategies are used to repair as well as protect organizational reputation, minimize negative affect, and curtail negative behavioral intentions. Several strategies have been proffered that will help protect the organizations most treasured assets. For instance, deny response strategies attempt to delink the organization from a crisis situation. In this case, the organization may not suffer any reputational damages if it indeed was not involved in the crisis in any way. For rumor and other related crises, the crisis managers deny any associations and refute charges against inappropriate behavior. In this context, the organization survives damage to its reputation only if the media and stakeholders accept this frame type.

Under the deny response strategies, other subcategories abound: Attack the accuser describes a situation where the crisis managers accost any one with allegations of organizational wrongdoing. The crisis manager stresses that there is indeed no problem. Scapegoat strategy encompasses the situation where the crisis manager attributes responsibility for the crisis on an external agent.

In the diminish strategy, the offensiveness of the crisis is reduced by arguing that the crisis is not as dangerous as people may think or similarly, it was beyond organizational control. These kinds of strategies are important when emphasizing existing crisis response perspectives. The effects of the crisis may be minimized if the crisis manager reduces the organization’s link to the crisis thereby making stakeholders view it with reduced negativity. But this may be counterproductive if the media or stakeholders overlook this
and believe their own frame of reference. Furthermore, excuse strategy involves the crisis manager reducing organizational responsibility by refuting claims of wrongdoing or asserting that the crisis was beyond them. Relatedly, the justification strategy posits that the crisis manager attempts to reduce the vagaries of the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Rebuild response strategies, according to Coombs (2007), are mainly used to change organizational perceptions by presenting new information or reminding stakeholders of the previous good works of the organization. Through this strategy, aid, apology and compensations can be provided which are significant in cultivating favorable reputation standings. They are mostly used in situations with high attribution of responsibility in the intentional or accidental crisis clusters which pose severe reputation threats as well as dent the relationship with stakeholders. In this strategy, compensation is used to help the affected by giving out money or other related gifts. Additionally, the crisis manager apologizes and notes that the organization will take full responsibility for the crisis.

Finally, in bolstering strategy, managers who have been having favorable reputations use this as stepping stone towards reputational protection, appraising stakeholders for their input in the crisis to improve the relationship status and trigger some sympathy in their positions as victims. The reminder strategy counters the current negative situation through mentioning previous good works. Remind strategy tells of the other previous works. Bolstering initiatives are designed to support all other response strategies as well as adjusting information. In this, reminder is employed in order to inform stakeholders of the previous organizational good deeds. Relatedly, through ingratiation, the crisis manager appreciates stakeholders’ efforts in the success of the organization, and
finally in victimage, crisis managers stress that they too are victims in the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Figure 1.1 SCCT Framework

Model for the Situational Crisis Communication Theory variables

According to attribution theory, people will search or make attributions for the causes of events, especially those that are negative and sudden (Weiner 1986, 2006). Additionally, when people make attributions to unpleasant events, they also experience emotions which are either anger or sympathy. In this vein, attribution of responsibility coupled with emotions act as catalysts for action. When a person or organization is judged responsible, negative behavioral responses will be invoked which will further trigger anger (Coombs,
On the contrary, when an individual or organization is not deemed responsible, positive behavioral responses are triggered and this produces sympathy (Weiner, 2006). Coombs & Holladay (2005) opined that stakeholder attribution of responsibility produces behavioral effects with affective attributes. If the organization is deemed responsible the reputation gets damaged and in turn stakeholders may get angry (Coombs, 2007).

According to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, understanding the crisis situation is very important since it provides a chance to determine the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies (Independent variable) that will reduce the reputational damage. In the crisis situation, three factors are responsible for the reputational threat: (1) Initial crisis responsibility, (2) Crisis history and (3) Prior relational reputation. Initial crisis responsibility encompasses stakeholder attribution of personal control for the crisis by the organization. Stakeholder attribution of personal control is the degree by which stakeholders believe the company’s behavior led to the crisis (Coombs, 1995, 2010).

Relatedly, studies have shown that the higher the attribution of responsibility, the lower the reputational perceptions in the stakeholder’s minds and vice versa (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2002, 2004). The initial crisis responsibility is founded on crisis type which is typically how the crisis is being framed in the minds of the stakeholders. Framing is crucial in shaping perceptions from the way information is packaged and this helps define situations (Cooper, 2002).

Since framing focuses on the salience of some attributes, the receivers of the communication messages will pay attention to the information that is given importance
when making decisions (Druckman, 2001), crisis type can be defined as a type of frame (Coombs, 2007). This is because crisis types carry with them some attributes and cues of the crisis situation which stakeholders use when trying to interpret a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The crisis type or frame will determine how stakeholders will attribute blame for the crisis to the organization.

Within the SCCT framework, attribution of responsibility is based on crisis type and thus three crisis clusters have been identified. The victims cluster poses the least attribution of responsibility, has the least reputational damage, and the organization is also perceived as the victim too. Examples include natural disasters, workplace violence, rumor, and product tampering. The accidental cluster has minimal attributions of responsibility and the reputational damage are also minimal. Furthermore, the crisis is viewed as accidental or unintentional. Examples include technical-error accident, technical-error product harm and challenge. Lastly intentional cluster has strong attributions of responsibility since the crisis is perceived as intentional or purposeful. Examples include human-error accident, human-error product harm and organizational misdeed (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Crisis history defines the situation in which the organization has or has not had similar crises in the past. Attribution theory posits that a history of crises portrays a problem that needs attention (Martinko et al., 2004). Prior reputation conceptualizes how well or not the organization has been treating its stakeholder in other situations. If an organization has been treating its stakeholders unfavorably, prior reputation will be negative which portrays an organization that pays less attention to its stakeholders and this increases the attribution of responsibility, and vice versa (Porritt, 2005).
2.2 General Literature Review

2.2.1 Crisis Communication

Organizations are prone to crises, it is not if but when the crisis will strike. A crisis can be defined as an unexpected event that threatens an organization’s important expectancies if not handled properly (Coombs, 2014). Additionally, a crisis has the potential to affect the organization as well as it’s stakeholders and involves three interrelated threats including stakeholder safety, financial losses, and reputational damage.

The value placed upon crisis communication is firmly pegged on the assumption that it will have a positive impact on the receivers. In gauging the effectiveness and extent of a communication text, the various stakeholder reactions are important in determining whether the communication was appropriate (Coombs, 2014).

In their analysis of effective crisis response strategies that can match the crisis types, Coombs and Holladay (2013; 2012a) established that the appropriateness of the crisis communication as well as the expected outcomes can be aggregated from their role which are reducing the damage on reputation, preventing secondary communication through negative word of mouth, and sustaining purchasing intention. Crisis communication involves the forms of information that is communicated which encompasses: (i) instructing information (ii) adjusting information (iii) reputation repair. Instructing information is information designed to inform stakeholders how to protect themselves as well as how to maneuver through the crisis. Adjusting information provides a framework for coping with the psychological or mental problems accruing form the crisis. Reputation repair is the process of actualizing the instructing as well as the adjusting
information to protect the stakeholders and help them dust off quickly (Coombs, 2007).

Crisis communication, the gathering, synthesis, and the dissemination of crisis information in order to help stakeholders protect themselves physically is a very integral part of crisis management (Coombs, 2007). Coombs (2014) averred that crisis communication is designed to protect organizational reputation from damage or reduce the threats caused by the damage. Further, crisis management, which is the process purposed at minimizing the threats to organizational stakeholders as well as the reputation is composed of three important phases: the pre-crisis, the crisis response, and the post-crisis.

The pre-crisis phase is the preparation phase. This stage involves the identification of the risks that may transform into crises, designing crisis management plan, identifying and selecting the crisis management team, training the team, and carrying out drills in order to seal all loopholes inherent (Coombs, 2014, 2010). Organizations must design and constantly update a crisis management plan, identify and select a crisis management team that is well trained, carry out drills, and construct pre-draft messages in order for effective and efficient response to a crisis when it comes. Early preparation as well as planning helps in effective response to a crisis and this reduces the damage on reputation and the stakeholders (Barton, 2001, Coombs, 2006).

As a reference tool, scholars have established that crisis management plan acts as a reminder of what each team member is obligated to do in the crisis situation as well as saving time by assigning tasks to crisis team members (Lerbinger, 2012; Coombs, 2015; Low, Chung, & Pang, 2012). According to Barton, (2001) the crisis team members should constitute members from different departments and with different expertise. Additionally,
they must be well trained in their various areas in the crisis team to increase efficiency and effectiveness. In as much as they have expertise from their different departmental jurisdictions, the crisis team members must be well trained and in order to be able to easily make relevant decisions during a crisis. Low et al., (2012) buttresses this point by noting that training improves effectiveness and also establishes confidence among team members (Coombs, 2015).

Media relations is very important especially during crisis management situations. Crisis management team must have some spokesperson or spokespeople who will be responsible for disseminating crisis information to stakeholders as well as the media. In this vein, (Lerbinger, 2012) argued that media training is essential for information consistency and avoid confusion which may lead to misinformation. Relatedly, pre-drafted messages, which are message templates from the organizational leadership that are filled with few notes during crisis situations save time since they are completed by filling in relevant information and distributed (Coombs, 2015). The crisis response is what the organization does or says after a crisis and has the potential of either sinking the organization or enhancing the organizational reputation. Research in crisis response is divided into initial crisis response, reputational repair and behavioral intentions. In the initial crisis response stage, three important conditions have been provided in order to prevent more damage: (1) Be quick (2) Be accurate (3) Be consistent.

Being fast and first is the best mantra that provides benchmarks for efficiency in crisis situations. The rationale behind having a crisis management plan in place ready as well as having the crisis team ready and trained is in order not to waste time during crisis. Additionally, having pre-drafted messages reduces the time that would have been taken to
design messages to be distributed. Research in the influences of conveying crisis information quickly has established that indeed stealing thunder, where the organization becomes the first to break the crisis news before any other party, is advantageous for organizations since they gain reputational mileage (Arpan & Pomper, 2003; Claeys & Cauerghe, 2012).

But with the advent of the Internet and subsequently social media, the pressure for speed has been upped. Being fast may not be pregnant with much new information but the position of the organization as the main information source is strengthened and increases its credibility as well as reputational standing. Being an information source portrays the organization as caring for the plight of its stakeholders and as those who must be informed of the goings on during the crisis. Additionally, stakeholder expectations during the crisis and especially in the technological savvy world, organizations are expected to be proactive to meet stakeholder demands (Lerbinger, 2012). On the contrary, silence creates room for others to take control of the crisis situation which will definitely dent the reputation (Hearit, 1994).

In the reputational repair and behavioral intentions, Benoit, (1995, 1997, 2015) identified repair strategies for which Coombs, (2007) went further and designed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) that provides a basis for selecting and identifying crisis response strategies that are in consonance with the crisis type, crisis history and relational reputation. These response strategies have disparities in how much they accommodate the victims, ranging from the least accommodative to the most accommodative.
In the post-crisis phase, the crisis is no longer the topic of discussion and the organization is returning to its normal operations. The promises that were made during the crisis response period should be fulfilled at this stage as well as provide information on the recovery process. Mitchell and Gustin, (2013) averred that social media provides an ideal platform for providing updates through the mass notification system through mobile phones, text messages, and email (Coombs, 2014).

In crisis situations, rhetorical arenas prop up, which are points where different perspectives about the crisis and the responses to the crisis are evidenced. In this vein, crisis managers must consider the impact of the different crisis response strategies on the stakeholders because in as much as they are the crisis communication content producers, the receivers or stakeholders who receive this crisis communication content can also become crisis communicators through secondary communication. These may be supporting or disputing the response strategies which affect their perception of the organization and the crisis (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010a). The multi-vocal approach in the rhetorical arena as elucidated by Coombs and Holladay (2013) is used to conceptualize the fact that crisis response strategies affect stakeholders differently and in turn they also will react to these response strategies either positively or negatively depending on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategies.

In their reaction to crisis response strategies, stakeholders will engage in secondary crisis communication by telling others of their feelings or will like, comment, or retweet in the case of social media. In this context, if the crisis response strategies were not in consonance with stakeholder expectations, the reputation will be dented and their engagement in secondary crisis communication will further deal a blow to the organization.
since negative word of mouth will be the focal point of the discourse in the rhetorical arena.

2.2.2 Crisis Response Strategies

According to Ki and Nekmat (2014) crisis response strategies are what an organization says or does after a crisis. Additionally, Ki and Brown (2013) defined crisis response strategies as a type of frame with which the crisis manager or the spokesperson employs in responding to a crisis. These crisis response strategies are significant in determining the overall perception stakeholders will have of the organization. For effective application of crisis response strategies, an organization must work through three important stages: (i) instructing information (ii) adjusting information (iii) reputation repair.

Instructing information is information designed to inform stakeholders how to protect themselves as well as how to maneuver through the crisis. Adjusting information provides a framework for coping with the psychological or mental problems accruing from the crisis. Reputation repair is the process of actualizing the instructing as well as the adjusting information to protect the stakeholders and help them dust off quickly (Coombs, 2007).

An organizational crisis is a sudden event that threatens an organization’s assets curtailing its future expectations. Furthermore, a crisis is potentially capable of sinking an organization as in the case of Enron (Seeger & Ulmer, 2003), destroy an organization’s reputation as in the case of Exxon-Valdes, and can be used as an opportunity for growth and promote an organization’s reputation as in the case of Tylenol (Fearn-Banks, 2016). The way an organization handles a crisis or responds to a crisis will by a great extent determine its success or failure as well as the impression it will have in the minds of stakeholders.
Organizational activities that precede a crisis situation will, by a large extent affect the perceptions the stakeholders will have in their minds (Barton, 2001; Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1999). Organizational response strategies are always attempts to protect its reputation which is the most important asset (Alsop, 2004; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Organizational reputation is the perception that stakeholders have in the minds about the organization (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). In this context, Nakra (2000) averred that a favorable reputational standing is a direct reflection of organizational success accruing from a positive relationship with stakeholders.

Relatedly, there are three key functions of crisis response strategies: to protect organizational reputation, to minimize negative affect, and to curtail negative intentions from stakeholders. The perceptions of attribution of responsibility will determine the response strategies that will be applied depending on the crisis type. The selection of these response strategies will depend on the three key factors: (1) Initial crisis responsibility (2) Crisis history (3) Relational reputation. In crisis situations, the more stakeholders attribute responsibility to an organization, the more the reputation gets damaged. Similarly, the less the attribution of responsibility stakeholders will attribute to an organization, the less the reputation damage (Coombs, 2007). When organizations select appropriate response strategies that are at par with the stakeholders’ expectations, they will perceive the organization as having their interests at heart thus a good relationship develops that will have a very positive impact on the reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, 2004, 2014).

Scholars have found that crisis response strategies embedded in SCCT are categorized in three groups: denial, diminish, and rebuild (Coombs, 2007). Crisis response
strategies used during a crisis influence the perceptions stakeholders have of the organization and the emotional attachment and reactions that relate to future interactions with the organization. This powerful role of communication during a crisis is also exemplified in the Image Restoration Theory (Benoit, 1995, 2015). Just like SCCT, Image Restoration Theory identifies crisis response strategies to be used in a crisis situation and inferring the effects of these responses on the organization position as well as stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

Crisis response strategies have been studied extensively in different scenarios triggering different results. For instance, on measuring the effects of image restoration strategies on organization-public relationship and the organization’s corporate social responsibility, Haigh and Dardis (2012) found that the reduce offensiveness strategy precipitated more favorable stakeholder perceptions than denial response strategies. These reduce offensiveness strategies include rebuild and diminish response strategies that attempt to position the organization positively in the eyes of the stakeholders.

According to Nerb and Spada (1997), the crisis response strategies employed in a crisis situation significantly affects how the stakeholders are going to perceive the organization. These perceptions will affect the reputational hold as well as future interactions with the organization. In their study on helping crisis managers efficiently protect organizational reputations in times of crisis, Coombs and Holladay, (2002) found that the more attributions of responsibility attributed to an organization’s the more accommodative crisis response should be. In this regard, compensation and apology are influential and accommodative crisis response strategies suited for preventable or intentional crises which have very high attribution of crisis responsibility.
Further, in their study on how attribution of crisis responsibility is influenced by organization-public relationship and crisis response strategies, Brown and White (2011), found that the degree of attribution of crisis responsibility is highly dependent on the organization-public relationship which shapes the choice of crisis response strategies. Crisis response strategies espouse the major difference between an organization’s failure and success. What an organization says and does after a crisis significantly affects its reputation (Barton, 2001; Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1999). During crises, researchers have established that post crisis proactive communication has been employed in order to reduce reputational damage as well as restore stakeholder trust (Benoit, 1997; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Further, according to Janssen, Sen, and Bhattacharya (2015); Tsarenko and Tojib (2015) and Coombs (2007), crisis response strategies are used to reduce stakeholder displeasure, maximize positive word-of-mouth and trigger forgiveness for organizational misdeed. In the SCCT framework, crisis response strategies should be heavier in caring about the stakeholders more than the organization. In other words, crisis response strategies should strive to be more accommodative than defensive. This explains the fact that the degree of accommodative a crisis response becomes defines the level of crisis responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

In experimental studies by Coombs (2007) and Dutta and Pullig (2011) examining how crisis response strategies vitiate against negative reputational perceptions, the results showed that denial strategies are always successful in situations where stakeholders admit the absence of crisis frame. In addition, using highly accommodative strategies in situations not warranting accommodative strategies may be counterproductive since the public may
assume the crisis responsibility is higher than anticipated (Coombs, 2007; Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009).

In the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, just as in the SCCT continuum, the selection and identification of crisis response strategies should be based on the contingent factors in the crisis environment which may encompass moderating aspects of the organizational public communications (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Dutta & Pullig, 2011). In the selection of the response strategies, factors like the crisis type (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dutta & Pullig, 2011; Kim et al., 2009; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015), stakeholder perception of the crisis and the organization (Dawar & Lei, 2009; Janssen et al., 2015; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015), the effects of the crisis on the reputation (Benoit, 1997; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Keller, 1993), and stakeholders affected (Benoit, 1997) must be prioritized.

In their study examining the interplay of reputation and crisis response strategies, Kiambi and Shafer (2016) found that in crisis situations with very high attributions of responsibility, the stakeholders prefer apology more than compensation. That stakeholders’ tendency to get angrier when an organization offers compensation in situations defined with high attributions of responsibility is very high than when apology is meted out. Reputation thus is positively evaluated if apology is used as the first crisis response strategy in preventable or intentional crises then followed by compensation.

Similarly, Kiambi and Shafer (2016) assessed the nexus between organizational reputation and crisis response strategies and found that having a good prior reputation helps vitiate against negative stakeholder intentions during a crisis. Equally, the use of
compensation strategy in crises pregnant with increased attributions of crisis responsibility produces more negative emotions than the use of apology, this is, as the aforementioned authors opined, due to the fact that stakeholders feel no amount of money can be equated with lost lives. It is prudent for organizations in such crises to own up and take full responsibility for their actions first. In examining crisis situations in which organizations are facing negative publicity due to sexual harassment allegations and toxic spill in a river, Lyon and Cameron (2004) found that indeed there were positive stakeholder perceptions of organizations with good prior reputations than those with unfavorable prior reputation.

However, this assertion was challenged by Coombs and Holladay (2008) who found out that compensation and sympathy are very effective in reducing stakeholder anger especially in crisis situations with very high attribution of crisis responsibility. In a study examining the interplay between crisis response strategies and timing strategies, Claeys and Cauberghe (2011) established that when an organization uses the ex-ante crisis timing strategy (stealing thunder), it does not matter if the organization uses other crisis response strategies or just the provision of objective information. However, on the other hand, if an organization uses an ex-post (thunder), crisis timing strategy, an addition of information about the crisis reduces its credibility than adding a crisis response strategy.

In this regard, stealing thunder, as Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) argued, conceptualizes a situation where an organization becomes the first to break the news about its own crisis before any other party. The main purpose of this strategy is to minimize the damage caused by the crisis (Dolnik et al., 2005) since if an organization in crisis does not break the news first, other interested parties will do so and will have more negative
consequences for the organization (Mauet, 2007) because they will use a crisis frame that may be contradictory to the organization’s frame.

In establishing the effects of stealing thunder in criminal and civil trials, Williams, Bougeois, and Croyle (1993) found that people in the ex-ante timing strategy had reduced chances of finding guilt in defendants than those in ex-post (thunder) strategy. This fact is strengthened by an assertion by that organizations employing ex-ante timing strategy gathered more credibility from the stakeholders than those employing ex-post timing strategy (Arpan & Pomper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005).

In addition, Williams, Bougeois, and Croyle, (1993) further concluded that in line with inoculation theory, stealing thunder provides an opportunity for organizations to provide warning signs to their stakeholders and eventually inoculate them with inferior versions of the crisis. Equally, this has been supported by the framing theory where the ex-ante timing strategy is appropriate because it provides room for organizations to frame the crisis situation in their own words (Williams, Bougeois, and Croyle, 1993).

In comparing the usage of both the timing strategies and crisis response strategies, Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, (2005) found that in as much as both strategies are aimed at reducing crisis damage and enhance organizational reputation, crisis timing strategies have been less used in research and also in real crisis scenarios. Archer and Burleson, (1980) further added that in employing an ex-post timing strategy, an organization does not acknowledge full responsibility for its own transgressions. However, an ex-ante timing strategy implies that an organization is taking full responsibility for its own transgressions (Archer & Burleson, 1980).
Scholars have also studied the use of crisis response strategies in an ex-post timing strategy scenario. In this regard, it was established that in the ex-post timing strategy condition, the utilization of crisis response strategies significantly minimizes the damage caused by the crisis as opposed to providing only the objective crisis information (Coombs, 2004; Huang, 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2008).

2.2.3 Organizational Reputation

Organizations always face turbulent times occasioned by crisis situations which trigger conflicting expectations and demands from stakeholders, failure to which organizational reputations get injured. In this perspective, the complexities and uncertainties that are occasioned by crisis are defined as institutional complexities, which require various prescriptions from multiple organizational logics (Frandsen, Johansen, & Salomonsen, 2016; Greenwood et al., 2011). In this context, crisis communication is a key organizational logic that aims at protecting reputations as well as stakeholders by providing helpful and needed information concerning the crisis. Organizational reputation can be defined as the totality of judgements, values, and beliefs concerning an organization’s intentions, abilities, history, vision, and mission strongly embedded in the stakeholder’s mindsets (Carpenter & Krause, 2012).

From a multidimensional approach to organizational reputation, Rindova and Martins’ (2012), opined that these stakeholder assessments, judgements, and perception of an organization all are consequences of their understanding and conceptualization of information emanating from different sources internal and external to the organization. Similarly, İşler, et, al., (2013) defined organizational reputation as the aggregate
stakeholder perception of an organization’s capabilities, trustworthiness, and expectations. A mirror of an organization. A conglomeration of an organization’s favorable and unfavorable impression in the stakeholders’ minds.

Organizational reputations constantly face threats which is due to existing in environments characterized by mediatization, ubiquity of crises, blame games and shifting goal posts. The proliferation of the media and media technology has increased the scope of mediatization where the presence of citizen journalism will increase the scope of information posted in media forms and easily disseminated. Ubiquity, the fact of appearing everywhere or just being common, has necessitated organizations to have crisis plans always.

Thus, reputational threats may be conceptualized as events that trigger negative affect on organizations most cherished assets, which are reputation and stakeholders (Gilad et al., 2013; Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2013), which eventually may transform into an organizational crisis (Coombs, 2015). Since organizational reputation encompasses stakeholders’ view of an organization, in times of crises, organizations must respond effectively and appropriately in order to protect their reputations from damage. Increasingly, damaged reputation has a direct influence on organization-stakeholder relationship which is very important in reputation growth (Ma & Zhan, 2015).

The scale of damage on reputation a crisis can produce will determine the crisis response strategy for an organization. Thus, crisis responsibility and intensifying factors define the potential reputational damage during a crisis. In this regard, crisis responsibility, which is the extent to which stakeholders’ attribute responsibility to the cause of a crisis is
influenced by the crisis type and the extent of the damage of the crisis and stakeholders will attribute different crisis responsibility to different crisis types.

Organizational reputation is the totality of perceptions stakeholders have in mind of a particular organization and how it treats its stakeholders (Wartick, 1992; Coombs, 2007). Reputations are valuable assets of an organization which can attract the best talent, improve financial standing, increase return on investment, as well as fashion competitive advantage (Carmeli & Tishler, 2005; Davies et al., 2003; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). According to Fombrun and van Riel (2004), reputations being crucial assets of an organization, they are formed when stakeholders receive favorable information about an organization through the media, through their frequent interactions with the organization, and second-hand information from other people. This makes the media’s role in reputation management significant (Carroll, 2004; Carroll & McCombs, 2003).

2.2.4 Disasters and Disaster Management

A disaster, according to Than, (2005) is a phenomenon that kills 10 or more people or may leave 100 others injured, homeless, displaced, or even in need to be evacuated. In this perspective, disasters are grouped according to their origin and range between man-made disasters (anthropogenic) or natural disasters. Globally, disasters that are weather related account for more than 70% of all disasters in the world and include cyclones, floods, tornadoes, blizzards, and droughts. Most of these disasters are exacerbated by human activity and together with global warming, their impact on society is gross.

Other natural disasters (geophysical) that are equally dangerous but are rare include tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and avalanches. Relatedly, man-made disasters
can be transformational, technological, or sociological disasters which are mostly unintentional and are preventable with sufficient precautionary information, apart from acts of terrorism which are intentional. Man-made disasters include spillovers, chemical leaks, structural collapse, terrorist activities, accidents, political violence, among others.

According to Reliefweb (2015) the prevalence of the geophysical disasters has assumed a constant trend between 1994-2013 while hydro-meteorological like tsunamis have had an exponential rise to about 300 cases per year since 2000 (Than, 2005). Furthermore, the last two decades have witnessed a total of 6,873 natural disasters which killed close to 1.35 million people and negatively affecting about 218 million people globally per annum. In the same breath, flooding, among the natural disasters, affected almost 2.5 billion people while massive storms coming second and killing more than 244,000 and accounting for US$936 billion in damages becoming the highest ever recorded. Droughts on the other hand accounted for only 5% or just 25% of the global aggregate of those affected (Reliefweb, 2015).

In the man-made disasters, transportation disasters take the lions share becoming the leading cause of death especially among those aged between 15 and 29 as well as being the second killer among those aged between 5 and 14. Presently, accidents account for 1.3 million deaths annually and nearly 50 people per every death get injured or incapacitated. In East Africa, Kenya leads with almost 3000 deaths per year (WHO Global status report, 2009). In a nutshell, the trends in the disaster frequency both man-made as well as natural has increased in the recent days. Sadly, developing nations are the most affected with 41% of the total global occurrences of drought for instance, were in Africa. These high numbers in terms of victims and destruction levels portend low levels of preparedness leaving many
poor nations of Africa and Asia vulnerable (Huho & Musyimi, 2016).

2.2.5 Disasters in Kenya

Like any other developing nation., Kenya is prone to various disasters both man-made and natural including droughts, fires, landslides, floods, HIV/AIDS, oil spill, terrorism, road accidents, drug abuse, among others. In the last decade, the magnitude, frequency, and the diversity of disasters has been on the rise causing an exponential increase in the number of victims. Although the number of disasters is high, they are the hydro-meteorological type like floods, landslides, and droughts.

2.2.7 Floods and Landslides

These are recurrent events that affect many people in different parts of the country. The most prone areas include the low-lying areas of Lake Vitoria basin like Budalangi, Kano plains, and Tana river delta. The results are always loss of lie, property, as well as soil erosion. Although poor drainage in urban places like Nairobi have caused so much flooding resulting in destruction of property. In dry areas occasional floods are witnessed where heavy rainfall cause flooding downstream like in Turkana, Samburu, and Eastern parts of Kenya. The historic El Nino floods in 1998 left close to 1.5 million people affected in various parts of the country.

Landslides are as result of heavy rainfall that weakens the soil because of the increased soil moisture and always happens in hilly escarpments. Although they are frequent in Central parts of Kenya and affects only a handful of people, they leave a trail of deaths and loss of property. For instance, in the year 2000, more than 2000 people were affected and displaced in Meru Central, Murang’a, Nyeri, and Nandi where five people lost
their lives.

According to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction of the United Nations, a disaster is a serious disruption of the society’s normal operations, significantly threatening people, health, property, as well as the environment, whether man-made, accident, or natural, and whether sudden or due to complex long-term process (Day t al., 2012). Disparities exist in the way people will respond to crises and this is normally due to individual perceptions particularly crises in need of quick and proactive response like natural disasters or acts related to human hostilities like terrorism and wars (Sylves, 2014). Uncertainties and emotions like fear and despair will always creep in causing confusion which requires management of the masses towards a particular direction or away from a dangerous point (Li et, al., 2016). In this regard, Gürtler, Hibbeln, and Winkelvos, (2016) postulated that in such events, people will seek answers as to what may have caused the crisis and will trigger debates which will look at the past similar events as well as the responses that were adopted.

The process of disaster management has evolved from early stages which were replete with immediate disaster response to response modes that encompasses minimizing risks before they transform into disasters where the focus is on preparation, responding and mitigation mechanisms through simulations.

According to Leonard, (2018), designing an appropriate crisis management plan is the first step towards an effective disaster management. This can be actualized by forming disaster committees for crisis deployment and designing appropriate response strategy matrix for each type of crisis (Denis et al., 2016). Additionally, drills should be carried out
in order to prove the effectiveness and efficiency of the plan and also seal any evident gaps (McMullen SAH et al., 2016).

In the current dispensation where the mobile telephony as well as social media has permeated all corners of the world, it is quite difficult to clearly authenticate the message source since social media has created a situation where anybody can be a source of information. According to Varghese and Paul, (2014), in order to reduce or prevent further damage from disaster, it is prudent to have early preparation by designing and having in place an updated disaster management plan. The plan has the following phases.

2.2.8 Stages in Disaster Management

2.2.8.1 The Pre-Stage

This stage focuses on reducing damage to life, property, as well as the environment. This stage is done in anticipation of a disaster without knowing the when it will strike. Here, drills are carried out to seal any inconsistencies as well as training the team members in their different areas. Preparedness, the readiness eschewed by the government or any other entity to efficiently face any disaster which includes drills. At this point, the local community needs to be sensitized or inoculated on the steps to follow in case of disaster.

2.2.8.2 The Response Stage

This is the actual activities after the disaster has struck. The activities are carried out according to the disaster management plan. The organization or government responsible has to break the news of the disaster to the people and initiate recovery process in order to save lives as well as protect further damage. Disaster information communicated has to be consistent to avoid causing more doubts and confusion.
2.2.8.3 The Post-Stage

Normal life and operations are slowly creeping back. Importantly, it is prudent to take necessary measures to ensure that reconstructive efforts are made that will prevent a similar disaster from occurring or even if it occurs, the extent of the damage will be lesser. Information promised initially is given here and also the learning process is initiated where any loopholes or crucial steps that were sidestepped are considered.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1 Crisis Response Strategies

In the process of responding to a crisis, organizations strive to retool and rebuild their organizational legitimacy through various strategies that aim at restoring their relationship with their stakeholders (Boyd, 2000; Coombs, 2006; Hearit, 1994; Lee, 2004, 2005). In this context, it is prudent for these organizations to select the most appropriate and effective crisis response strategies that will help protect the stakeholders as well as the reputation.

Crisis response strategies play a very important role in vitiating against negative stakeholder reactions and behaviors. In addition, crisis response strategies, defined as what an organization says and does after a crisis (Coombs, 2007), can sink an organization, destroy an organization and equally provide an opportunity for organizational growth. In their examination of the collapse of Enron, one of the largest financial institutions in the US, Seeger and Ulmer (2003) applied a crisis communications and leadership roles and responsibilities perspective and established that the lack of appropriate and effective post crisis communication was the missing concept that led to the sinking of the organizations.
The principles and responsibilities of communication necessary to create an ambient environment in an organization include (a) communicating appropriate and effective values to fashion a respectful climate, (b) maintaining effective communication strategies for dissemination of organizational activities, and (c) maintaining transparency to any potential risks and signs of crises. In this case, the lack of application of effective and appropriate crisis response strategies to cushion against any negative stakeholder reaction has the potential for causing significant injuries to the stakeholders and organizational reputation.

Further, scholars have established that crisis response strategies have the ability to destroy an organizations most important asset, its reputation if not applied effectively (Harrauld, Cohn, and Wallace, 1992; Coombs & Holladay, 2010). This is explicated well by Harrauld, Cohn, and Wallace, (1992) who investigated the events surrounding the Exxon-Valdes oil spill in which the reactive response by its leaders led to a tarnished reputation and a change of management. Reactive crisis response, as opposed to proactive crisis response, is always characterized with inefficiency and do not always result in positive reputational score. However, Smith, (2009) conceptualized reactive crisis response strategies as mechanisms used by organizations in responding to situations that have destabilized their normal operations for which they have been forced to reactively react reduce the inherent pressures. In his analysis of the use of reactive crisis response strategies, he further argued that reactive crisis responses have roots on three communication theories: apologia, theory of accounts and image restoration.

Relatedly, crisis response strategies have the potential to create an opportunity for organizational growth in terms of organizational reputation. Fearn-Banks (2016) analyzed
the Tylenol crisis and established that indeed the way an organization handles its crisis goes a long way in defining its future direction and the relationships with the different stakeholders. The way an organization handles a crisis or responds to a crisis will by a great extent determine its success or failure as well as the impression it will have in the minds of stakeholders. They found that Tylenol’s success was hinged on effective post crisis communication that endeared the stakeholders to perceive it as a caring organization after it recalled all the faulty products and replaced them immediately. In this regard, according to Szczepanik (2003), the virtues of honesty, fairness and being fast and first were the main pillars that established credibility of Johnson and Johnson. Equally, the public relations leader had established a good media relations framework and no information would be published concerning his organization without his knowledge.

Because the crisis in this context was packaged as preventable thus having a very high degree of attribution or responsibility, the use of apology and eventual recall of the products played a significant role in reducing stakeholder anger and any intended negative reactions and behaviors. According to Center and Jackson (2003), the success of Tylenol company can be attributed to a good organization-stakeholder relationship that vitiated any negative stakeholder reactions in times of a crisis. Equally, Tylenol, which has remained the best example of a successful crisis communication, had fashioned a healthy prior reputation or a reputational account which cushioned it against any unpleasant stakeholder behaviors and reactions. The crisis response strategies that were employed by the organization were very appropriate and effective that matched the crisis type which led to Tylenol successfully sailing through the crisis.
In their examination of the Exxon-Valdes oil tanker accident, Williams and Treadaway (1992) established that the response to the accident was slow and the strategies used were quite ineffective. In the SCCT framework, Coombs (1995, 2007) and Coombs and Holladay (2010) argued that organizations in crisis ought to be first and fast in order to protect the stakeholders from further damage as well as protect the organizations' reputation. The aforementioned scholars found that Exxon-Valdez crisis communication efforts failed largely due to late response to the crisis that warranted immediate response and also the use of scapegoat strategies.

Bundy and Pfarrer (2015) examined how defensive crisis response strategies that are used in crises characterized by low attributions of responsibility and how this will attempt to minimize an organization’s linkage with the crisis. They found that crisis response strategy application always needs critical assessment of the crisis type to avoid a backlash. Examples of these crisis responses include denial, defiance, and scapegoating (Coombs & Holladay, 2004; Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015; Elsabach, 2003; Pfarrer, DeCeltes, Smith, & Taylor, 2008). On the other hand, other researchers consented that crisis response strategies that align themselves with increased levels of attribution of responsibility, otherwise called accommodative, will suite situations where organizations acknowledge responsibility for wrong doing. Examples of accommodative responses include apologies, expressions of sympathy, and promises of corrective actions (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002; Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

In crisis situations, to further protect the stakeholders and the organizational reputation, Claeys and Cauberghe (2012) examined the timing crisis strategies and concluded that organizations need to be the first to break the crisis news before any other
party in order to safeguard their reputations. The practice of being first to break the crisis news has been referred to as stealing thunder. Further, Claeys and Cauberghe, (2012) and Pfarrer, Smith, et al., (2008) argued that to reduce negative perceptions and enhance reputational hold, organizations in crisis must be the first to break crisis news in order to minimize negative stakeholder perceptions. Other scholars have suggested that in times of crisis, engaging in anticipatory crisis response strategies that reduced the negativity of stakeholder reactions, like embedding negative news with positive news will play a significant role in protecting an organizations important expectancy (Elsbach, Sutton, & Principe, 1998; Graffin, Carpenter, & Boivie, 2011; Graffin, Haleblian, & Kiley, 2016).

According to Coombs and Holladay (2013), crisis communication is important in that it assumes that it will have a positive implication for the stakeholders and by extension the organization. Benoit (1995) averred that crisis response strategies significantly affect organizational reputation. Additionally, when crisis response strategies are employed, subsequent stakeholder reactions will have a bearing on the assessment of the overall communication effectiveness. Relationally, crisis response strategies are tasked with reducing reputational damage, curtailing negative word-of-mouth, and sustaining purchase intentions.

In crisis communication research with attribution theories as the guiding principle, how stakeholders perceive organizational responsibility as well as reputation has been the main point of focus for many scholars (Coombs, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2004; Lee, 2004). In this context, many scholars were specifically interested in the nexus between stakeholder attribution of responsibility and the selection of the most appropriate and effective crisis response strategies (Coombs, 1995, 1999; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). For
instance, Coombs (2004) analyzed the impacts of past crises on the current crisis communication and found that the history of organizational previous crises has a significant influence on the selection of crisis response strategies for the current crisis. This fact, he argued, is stronger especially if the crisis falls under preventable or intentional crisis type. This is because if the organization, for instance, did not respond well in previous crises, the current crisis will need strong crisis response strategies in order to minimize unfavorable feelings and views.

Crisis response strategies are used to protect organizational reputations by demonstrating succinctly that the organization cares for its stakeholders and knows what to do in crisis situations. This fact is strengthened by Coombs and Holladay (1996) who examined the nexus between crisis response strategies and attributions of crisis responsibility and their subsequent influences on organizational reputation. Their findings indicated that effective and appropriate crisis response strategies are a panacea for reputational repair and growth.

By analyzing crisis scenarios or organizations with increased attributions of crisis responsibility especially those that fall under preventable or intentional crisis cluster, Lyon and Cameron (2004) found that positive attitudes and perceptions were established in organizations with good prior reputations than those with bad prior reputation thus this called for application of simple crisis response strategies since already a favorable prior reputation vitiates against any negative feelings or perceptions from the stakeholders.

Further, in a study on the interplay between prior reputation and an appropriate and effective crisis response strategy, Lyon and Cameron (2004) established that organizations
that used accommodative crisis response strategies like apology and compensation resulted in more favorable post crisis reputations than those organizations that used other types of crisis response strategies. This is because accommodative crisis response strategies always position the organization as having the interests of the stakeholders at heart and protecting them is their sole mandate and mostly used in situations with increased attributions of crisis responsibility.

Crisis events have been established to influence the stakeholders differently and the stakeholders equally react in varying ways. In this regard, scholars have argued that different emotions due to disturbing events like crises enhance varying levels of information processing (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994; Nabi, 2002; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). For instance, Bodenhausen, Sheppard, and Kramer (1994) studied the different levels of negative affect, in this context anger and sadness, due to crises and concluded that these two emotions differently affect how different people process crisis information. Anchored in these arguments, Kim and Cameron (2011) examined the ways in which emotional news coverage of an organizational crisis (anger-inducing vs. sadness-inducing) may provide frames that influence people’s emotional response as well as subsequent perceptions and the crisis response strategies that can effectively and appropriately reduce anger and sadness and by extension protect the reputation. They found that organizations need to frame their crisis information effectively in order not to trigger any negative feelings and reactions which may put the organization in a precarious position.

In analyzing the crisis response strategy and crisis type suitability in the MH370: Malaysian Airline System (MAS), Ashari, Maisha, Ahmad, and Samani (2017) found that
in the application of crisis response strategies, it is prudent to examine the crisis situations in order to identify and select the most appropriate and effective crisis response strategies that will help in protecting the stakeholders from further injuries as well as protect organizational reputations. Matching crisis types with appropriate and effective response strategies which have different levels of attribution of crisis responsibility significantly helps in protecting the organization’s important assets.

Crises create uncertainties which affect stakeholder perception of organizational reputation. In crisis situation, attribution of responsibility is the main pillar upon which the level of damage to reputation rests. The stronger the attribution of crisis responsibility, the more negative the stakeholders will perceive the organization and this will lead to increased reputational damage. Equally, the stronger the attributions of crisis responsibility, the more accommodative crisis response strategies applied should be. Crisis response strategies are designed to reduce the attributions or crisis responsibility by altering the perceptions of the public towards the crisis (Coombs, 1995, 2007).

According to Brown and White (2011), SCCT employs attribution theory to examine an organization’s degree of crisis responsibility and recommends appropriate crisis response strategies. Attribution of responsibility posits that people will always look out for causes of events, especially negative events. Further, attribution of responsibility assumes that in times of crises, people will want to know why and what happened. In so doing, people will attribute responsibility to someone or something because this makes them conceptualize a phenomenon (Weiner, 1985).
Ki and Brown (2013) examined the effects of crisis response strategies on attribution of responsibility towards an organization and the resultant organization-public relationship. They investigated the influences of four crisis response strategies, scapegoating, justification, apology, and reminding on organizational attribution of crisis responsibility. In their findings, they established that none of these strategies had an impact on the attribution of crisis responsibility. Their findings corroborated other scholars’ findings in which similar antecedents were tested (Brown & White, 2011; Haigh & Dardis, 2008).

Scholars argued that the presence of a crisis destabilizes the organization-public relationship thus it is prudent to use appropriate crisis response strategies that will repair the relationship which is important for organizational survival. Efforts by an organization on building an organization-public relationship will influence how the stakeholders will perceive the crisis as well as the organization and equally will determine the type of crisis response strategies to be used (Coombs, 2007a; Fearn-Banks, 2007).

Organization-public relationship is the main pillar upon which organizational reputation rests and this determines how an organization will behave in turbulent times. The various antecedents of organization-public relationship like satisfaction, trust, and commitment have been found to have implications on organizational well-being and on the choice of crisis response strategies. Research has established that stakeholder trust improves an organization’s image and piles on the reputational capital which cushions against turbulence (Ki & Hon, 2007b).
In addition, in examining the commitment-trust theory and its influence on organization-public relationship, Morgan and Hunt (1994) found that both commitment and trust, the antecedents of organization-public relationship have a role to play in the way an organization interacts and behaves with the various stakeholders which will define their perception of the organization. Further, in this scenario, in a study titled ‘Antecedents and consequences of trust and satisfaction in buyer-seller relationships’, Selnes (1998) found that stakeholder trust and satisfaction are the panacea towards better behavioral intentions. This is because when an organization is positively judged by the stakeholders, any disturbance on the normal operations will not be harshly judged.

Research attempted to link SCCT strategies to changes in relationship outcomes (Ki & Brown, 2013). Fashioning a positive organizational-public relationship is the goose that lays the golden eggs for organization especially when attempting to shape the perception of a crisis. Additionally, a good organizational-public relationship vitiates against any negative stakeholder reaction after a crisis hits. On the other hand, a negative relationship history will significantly have a bearing on the perception of the organization which will be injurious to the reputation (Coombs & Holliday, 2001).

Organizational-public relationship have been found to shape the attribution of crisis responsibility which informs the selection of effective and appropriate crisis response strategies that will help protect organization’s reputation. In their study analyzing the effects of crisis response strategies on the organization-public relationship, Brown and White (2011) found that in situations where there is a positive organization-public relationship, apology had the highest attribution of responsibility and reminding the lowest attribution of responsibility. Coombs (2007a) argued that increased attributions of
responsibility led to an increased reputational damage and a reduced attribution of responsibility led to less reputational damage. In similar vein, when there is an unfavorable organization-public relationship, scapegoat is the most preferred response strategy (Brown and White, 2011).

As Claeys and Cauberghe (2011) opined, there are two types of crisis response strategies: crisis response strategies and timing strategies. SCCT posits that in preventable crises (crises with high degrees of attribution of responsibility), accommodating rebuild crisis response strategies like apology are the most effective in order to guarantee reputational protection. Timing strategy has been found to be a major factor in solidifying an organization’s credibility. When a crisis hits, an organization has to be the first to break the crisis news before any other party or the media (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). This strategy reduces the damage caused and poses the organization as transparent and has nothing to hide (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2011).

2.3.2 Organization Reputation

In their study on the nexus between an organization’s reputation and the appropriate crisis response strategies, Kiambi and Shafer (2016) found that organizations with positive prior reputation had better post crisis stakeholder judgements than organizations with bad or unfavorable prior reputations. In this case, organizations with favorable prior reputation had reduced levels of attribution of responsibility and those with unfavorable prior reputation shouldered very high attributions of responsibility which eventually greatly affected their reputations negatively.
Further, they documented that the choice of effective crisis response strategies is informed by the stakeholder’s perception of the organization, which is defined by the organization-stakeholder relationship, and prior organizational reputation. In this regard, organizations facing high attribution of crisis responsibility should use apology response in order to cultivate a positive perception in stakeholders’ minds. Relatedly, organizations with a positive prior reputation have an advantage regardless of the crisis type. In this case, a positive organizational prior reputation reduces stakeholder anger thus apology response is the best alternative (Kiambi & Shafer, 2016).

A good relationship between an organization and its stakeholders cushions an organization against negative reactions or behaviors from stakeholders during crises. This relationship is very important since it protects the organization’s reputation from damage due to a crisis (Coombs, 2000). In their study, Coombs and Holladay (1996, 2001) found out that attribution of crisis responsibility is closely related to organizational reputation. This is due to the fact that since organizational reputation is defined as the totality of stakeholder assessments of organizations wellbeing and its ability to fulfil stakeholder expectations, their perception of reputation will depend on their relationship with the organization which will define the level of attribution of crisis responsibility to the organization.

According to Coombs and Holladay (2001, 2004), the presence of intensifying factors increases the reputational threat which damages the organization’s hold among stakeholders. Crisis history postulates that an organization that has had similar crises in the past has a weak reputational hold than an organization that has no crisis history. Prior relationship reputation, additionally, describes a situation where if an organization has
treated its stakeholders badly previously will have greater attribution of crisis responsibility and will suffer more reputational damage than an organization that has a good relationship with its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). Similarly, crisis history and prior relational reputation have a significant effect on attribution of crisis responsibility which calls for a careful selection of crisis response strategies in order to help protect the stakeholders and organizational reputation (Coombs, 2004a, b; Coombs & Holladay, 2001).

2.3.3 Attribution of Responsibility

Crises are quite unexpected events whose cause is always not known which triggers the placement of blame towards individuals or organizations (Coombs, 2007). When this blame is directed towards an organization, it has significant influences on how the stakeholders will perceive it. In SCCT, attribution theory has been used to explain the fact that people want to know the causes of the crises and why (Weiner, 1985). In this milieu, from a psychological lens, the people want to attribute crisis responsibility for events, especially unpleasant events on someone or something because they want to make sense of the situation better. SCCT employs the attribution theory to measure the levels of attribution of responsibility pegged on an organization and further make recommendations for appropriate crisis response strategies.

In crisis communication scholarship, one theme that has remained consistent over time is the fact that the crisis situation influences the choice of crisis response strategies (Bitzer, 1968; Black, 1965; Metts & Cupach. 1989; Ware & Linkugel, 1973; Wilson, Cruz, Marshall, & Rao, 1993). To this end, the roots of crisis response strategies defined in apologia theory and the response to embarrassment, are founded in the belief that crisis
situations are important concepts in the selection of effective and appropriate crisis response strategies (Hobbs. 1995; Kruse, 1986; Sharkey & Stafford, 1990). Attribution theory thus provides the best mechanism for explaining the relationship existing between the selection of appropriate crisis response strategies and crisis situation which conceptualizes the crisis type.

Scholars aver that people will look out for the causes of events through various ways and domains (Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988) where four important causal dimensions were found to be used to make attributions: stability, external control, personal control, and locus. Stability describes whether the events takes place frequently (stable) or not (unstable). External control explains whether the events was controllable or not. Personal control examines whether the event was within the actor’s control or not. Locus foregrounds whether the event was something about the actor or about the situation (McAuley et al., 1992; Russell, 1982; Wilson et al., 1993).

In a study by Cho and Gower (2006), they examined how the human-interest frame and the type of a crisis influenced the attribution of crisis responsibility and found that the human-interest frame had a significant influence on the stakeholder’s emotional response and the emotional response strongly influenced the way stakeholders attributed responsibility.

In addition, An, Gower and Cho (2011) examined how different media cover attribution of crisis responsibility and whether there are any differences dependent on crisis type. Through content analysis of the level of responsibility and crisis response strategies found in the news coverage of major crises, their findings indicated that crisis type was a
major determinant on how the news media covered the crises. This is because most news media covered preventable crises from an individual level attribution of responsibility perspective while accidental crises were mostly covered from an organizational responsibility perspective. Concerning crisis response strategies, preventable crises were covered mostly in terms of denial strategies while accidental crises used rebuild strategies.

In yet another study by Verhoeven and Vuuren (2012) on how apologies and attribution of crisis responsibility impact the reputation of both the organization and spokesperson, it was established that crises are perceived as a collective and/or organizational responsibility and not pegged on an individual and influences the organization’s reputation in significant ways.

In addition, Brown and white (2011) examined how the organization-public relationship is influenced by the presence of attribution of crisis responsibility in a crisis situation. Their study found that organization-public relationship was a determinant of attribution of crisis responsibility. In this context, organizations with positive relationship with their stakeholders had a lower level of attribution of responsibility than those with negative relationship with their stakeholders. Stakeholders with a positive relationship with an organization were less likely to place more blame on the organization regardless of the crisis type.

In their research on how relationships between an organization and its publics affect the publics’ perceptions of a crisis regarding organizational responsibility, Park and Reber (2011) found that stakeholders who make internal attributions about an organizational crisis will put more blame on the organization than those with external attributions. Their
finding corroborates findings from other studies like Coombs & Holladay (1996) and Lee (2004) in which it was established that crises caused within an organization carry an increased degree of attribution of crisis responsibility because it is believed that the cause is as a result of organization’s behavior.

In this context, Coombs and Holladay (2001) postulated that there is a strong correlation between personal control and attribution of crisis responsibility. In other words, increased internal attributions of crisis responsibility have a direct effect on the amount of blame pegged on an organization (Lee, 2004). This in effect negatively affects organizational reputation which now shapes the identification and subsequent selection of the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2004, 2007). Depending on the degree of reputational damage, attribution of crisis responsibility will define the selection of crisis response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

The framework for attribution theory holds that people will always peg attributions on events they encounter, especially negative events (Kelley, 1972; Weiner, 2006, 1986). The locus of control is the basis upon which attribution rests. This is the internal/internal paradigm in which the by large strides affects people’s behaviors and perceptions and further postulates that people will always make strong internal attributions but make weak attributions on external causes. This is because it is believed that those internally caused were within the purview of organizational control than those from outside which are believed to be beyond the control of an individual or organization (Weiner, 2006, 1986).

According to Coombs (2000), organizational attribution of crisis responsibility is the measure of blame pegged on an organization by stakeholders especially based on
internal attribution. In this, stakeholders will attribute more blame on an internal cause than on an external cause (Weiner, 2006, 1986). Additionally, Coombs (2000, 2007a) concluded that the level of attribution of responsibility is positively correlated to the crisis type which, by extension has an impact on the organization reputation. Furthermore, in an examination of crisis situations grounded on attribution of crisis responsibility, Coombs (1998) found that internal attributions of responsibility positively correlate with high attributions of responsibility and negatively correlates with organizational image.

According to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework, reputational damage due to a crisis is informed by the level of attribution of crisis responsibility and the intensifying factors which are crisis history and relational reputation. Crisis responsibility, defined as the degree to which stakeholders attribute the cause of the crisis to an organization or an individual result from the type of crisis as well as the amount of damage caused (Coombs, 2006).

In examining the attribution theory as a guide to post crisis scholarship, Coombs (2006) concluded that there will always be disparities in the way stakeholders attribute crisis responsibility to different crises. These disparities will be due to the way the organization has been treating its stakeholders as well as the crisis history. Relational reputation describes whether an organization has been treating its stakeholders favorably or unfavorably. If the treatment is favorable, stakeholders will attribute lesser crisis responsibility but the attribution will be high if the treatment has been unfavorable (Coombs, 2007).
Similarly, in his analysis of crisis type suitability and the degree of blame attributed, Coombs (2007) found that crisis type affects crisis responsibility with great strides. The victim cluster has the lowest attribution of crisis responsibility since the organization itself is also a victim, and has very little effects on reputation. The accidental cluster has minimal attribution of crisis responsibility and its effects on reputation are not so much. The intentional cluster has very high attribution of crisis responsibility since it is believed the organizations actions led to the crisis. This cluster greatly influences the reputation.

In an examination of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework, Coombs (2007b) concluded that during crises, the identification and subsequent selection of the most appropriate and effective crisis response strategy will be greatly impacted by degree of attribution of crisis responsibility. In this regard, depending on the type of crisis, the application of crisis response strategies that match the crisis type will reduce the extent of the damage and improve the stakeholder perception of both the crisis and the organization.

On this, White and Brown (2011) opined that for organizations to expand their reputational score, it is important to fashion per-crisis relationships that will help vitiate any negative stakeholder reaction during a crisis because this relationship has a very strong influence on the perception of the organization and the crisis. Their study found that a positive organization-public relationship eventually leads to reduced attributions of responsibility for the organization. In contrast, a negative organization-public relationship leads to increased levels of attribution of responsibility which injures the reputation.
Furthermore, apology strategy in crisis has a very high attribution of crisis responsibility when there is a positive organization-public relationship while reminding strategy resulted in low attribution of crisis responsibility (White & Brown, 2011). In unfavorable organization-stakeholder relationship, scapegoat strategy had the strongest attribution of crisis responsibility while reminding has the lowest.

These findings corroborate Coombs (2007a) assertion that initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and relational reputation have greater effects on reputation. In this regard, crisis type shapes the level of attribution of crisis responsibility as well as the selection of crisis response strategies. For victim cluster, there will be very little attribution of responsibility and negligible effects on reputation. Accidental cluster have minimal levels of attributions and equally reduced effects on reputation. The intentional cluster has the highest attributions of responsibility and greater effects on organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007a).

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina that hit the United States of America in 2004, the Federal Government failed to respond immediately leading to the deaths of close to 1464 people who would not have died had the federal government responded on time. In disaster, the disaster management itself became a disaster after allegations of race being the reason the delay was initiated emerged. In the words of Moynihan, (2009, p. 18) “the world watched as government responders seemed unable to offer basic protection from the ravages of nature”.

Even though there were sufficient inoculation efforts done and emergency declarations done in advance, the government still was unable to protect life and property.
The government failed to use the inoculation messages as a stepping stone for early preparation appropriate with the expected disaster. Eventually, 1,464 people died, the highest in one single disaster in the USA soil, but which would have been avoided with proactive response. Although it was a natural disaster and the government itself was also a victim, the delay in responding increased the attribution of responsibility for the US government and this entirely established a dent on the reputation of the American government (Moynihan, 2009).

Response strategies are purposed at protecting organizational reputation, minimize negative affect, and to curtail negative intentions from stakeholders. In this case, the use of victimage, which is a strategy employed in situations when the organization is also a victim of the crisis, applies appropriately since it was a natural disaster. Additionally, the use of apology and compensation played out to minimize the extent of the damage. The government took full responsibility for the crisis and went ahead to compensate the affected people. To cap it all, the government employed ingratiating, by reminding the citizens that it has the best interests of the people of America at heart and that it would do anything to protect them.

In 2017, Mozambique experienced the worst floods ever since 2000 where 135 people lost their lives, more than 200,000 people were affected and destroyed close to 200 homes leaving many more homeless. In addition, according to Maputo Municipality damage estimates, property worth US$29 million was destroyed which was the worst since 2000. In their response, the government of Mozambique took it upon itself to protect the citizens from further harm. The government compensated the victims who had lost everything in the floods and also took full responsibility for the victims. This rebuild
technique as well as ingratiation will be very influential in reminding the people that this was a natural disaster and the organization itself is also a victim. Ingratiation here is employed to remind the people of the good work of the government and that it’s the government’s responsibility to protect its citizens.

In Kenya, the vagaries of climate change are real as severe drought and floods alternate in reducing the vulnerability potential of the people. In Turkana, it is now common knowledge that the area exists on the extremes. This is because droughts come and become so severe that animals die and people pass through untold suffering due to hunger. On the contrary, when the rains come, the floods become severe such that people’s homes become submerged in water for some time (Julius, Janet, Mashara, Musyimi, 2016).

In its reconstructive efforts, the government provides drought resistant seeds that are fast maturing and can withstand extreme weather conditions. Additionally, the government is adopting ingratiation mechanisms when it tries to protect the people from suffering. The use of apology and compensation is evident when the government to help the people stand on their feet and continue their normal lives. Coombs, (2007) averred that apology, compensation, victimage, and ingratiation are strategies best suited for natural disasters where the organization itself is a victim (Julius, Janet, Mashara, Musyimi, 2016).
2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework

In this study, the independent variables include crisis response strategies, attribution of responsibility, and crisis type. According to Starks, Diehr, and Curtis (2009), an independent variable encompasses the treatment or effect on the dependent variable and shows the presence of a causal linkage under examination. In this case, the type of crisis response strategy selected must be in consonance with the level of attribution of responsibility to fashion a positive organizational reputation. Similarly, the crisis response
strategies must match with the crisis type in order to guarantee a positive reputational image (Coombs, 2007).

The intervening variable provides a description of the relations that exist between the dependent and independent variable (Vogt, 2005). Emotional response from stakeholders will be informed by the level of attribution of responsibility pegged on the organization. Attribution of responsibility describes the degree to which an organization is deemed responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). In this regard, the higher the level of attribution of responsibility, the more anger is produced by stakeholders which damages the reputation. Likewise, the less the level of attribution of responsibility, the more sympathy is produced and this has near nil reputational damage. Emotional response is the intervening variable.

The dependent variable is the organizational reputation. According to Starks, Diehr, and Curtis (2009) and Friedman (2000), a dependent variable which is also called the outcome is a representation of the result of a relationship with the independent variable. In this study, organizational reputation is the dependent variable since the overall stakeholder perception of the organization will depend on the crisis response strategies employed. Effective and appropriate crisis response strategies will lead to a favorable view of the organization and inappropriate crisis response strategies will lead to a negative view of the organization which will hurt the reputation (Coombs, 2007, 2010). In this vein, this study will be guided by the following research questions.
2.5 Research Questions

RQ1: What perceived response strategies were used by the Kenya government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy?

RQ2: How did the response strategies employed by the Kenya government affect stakeholder’s perception of it?

RQ3: How did the stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility influence the Kenya government reputation?

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) as established by Coombs, (1995) and describes the importance of assessing the initial crisis responsibility for the organization, the crisis history, as well as the relational reputation them responding effectively and appropriately in order to protect the reputation of an organization. What an organization says or does after a crisis is key in determining its future which is embedded in the reputation. Favorable reputation is very important for organizational success. How an organization treats its stakeholders will have a bearing on the relationship that will be fashioned with the stakeholders. This relationship will be key in that if the relationship is positive then definitely the reputation will equally be positive and vice versa. Globally, disasters have wreaked havoc and killed people in thousands as well as destroying property of great value. The speed with which many governments respond to these disasters will determine the number of lives saved as well as the amount of property nit destroyed. Many governments have been criticized for reactive approach to disasters due to poor disaster preparation and poor information or knowledge management.
3. CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provided a plan for the proposed research. The chapter started by foregrounding the research design that was used in the study. In addition, the method that was used for the collection of data as well as the instruments that were used to collect data were well explained. How the data was analyzed and the ethical consideration which showed the way to deal with the respondents in order not to infringe on their rights to participate or not to participate were well described.

3.2 Research Design.

A research design is conceptualized as a plan, a blueprint, or a framework for examination or variables so as to find answers to the proposed research questions (Kumar, 2011). Further, a good research design has a well-defined research questions as well as a consistent data collection method (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Further, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2016) defined a research design as framework of how researchers expect to provide answers to the research questions.

According to Kothari, (2012), three types of research designs exist: exploratory research design, descriptive research design, and hypothesis testing research design. Exploratory research design is purposed at crafting a research problem for a more apt examination of and developing a hypothesis and generation of new information. Descriptive research design, for which this study adopts, describes the features of a particular situation or person while diagnostic research design examines how regular
phenomena occur or their interactions with others. Hypothesis testing research design, also known as experimental studies, encompass those in which the researcher tests the hypotheses of variables with causal relationships.

This study adopted the descriptive research design because it focused on predictions of a particular situation, Solai, provided information and features of a type of group of people or phenomena, the Solai people who were mostly victims of the tragedy (Yin, 2009). In the same vein, this study, in the assessment of a crisis situation, permitted the prediction of the outcome of a crisis response strategy from the stakeholders by matching the crisis response strategy with crisis type through the examination of the attribution of crisis responsibility. Furthermore, research designs are fashioned appropriately based on whether the research questions are explanatory or descriptive since it influences the kind of information collected (Yin, 2009).

3.3 Research Approach

Research approach is the plan or strategy for research which involves the processes ranging from the assumptions defined broadly to data collection tools and the data analysis. There are three types of research approaches namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research focuses on examining and comprehending the different meanings people attach to both social and human problems and provide conclusions descriptively, or without mathematical figures (Creswell, 2014; Almalki, 2016; Holliday, 2007). Quantitative approach on the other hand deals with statistical data analysis and numerical information to craft quantitative conclusions (Lund, 2005). Mixed method, as McKim, (2015) averred, is the adoption of both qualitative and quantitative methods in
collecting and analyzing data. This study employed quantitative survey research approach because mathematical based methods were used in analyzing data descriptively (Babbie, 2010). In addition, the choice of quantitative research was informed by the large sample of 1000 that was be used.

3.4 Population and Sampling Design

3.4.1 Population

A study population is the totality of aspects from which the sample is selected. The proposed study took place in Nakuru County. Nakuru County is found in the former Rift Valley Province consisting of a cosmopolitan population. According to the 2009 national census, Nakuru county had a population of approximately 2, 046, 395 people with 1, 026, 924 males and 1, 019, 471 females. Nakuru County, located in the South-Eastern part of the former Rift Valley province borders 7 other counties: Nyandarua on the East, Laikipia on the North East, Narok on the South West, Kajiado on the South, Baringo on the North, Bomet/ Kericho on the West. Further, the county has 11 sub-counties: Nakuru Town East, Nakuru Town West, Njoro, Molo, Gilgil. Naivasha, Kuresoi North, Kuresoi South, Rongai, Subukia, Bahati. These sub-counties are further divided into 55 administrative wards. The population of Nakuru is cosmopolitan with close to all Kenyan tribes residing and coexisting peacefully.

3.4.2 Target Population

Target population, as Cooper and Schindler, (2014) argued, is the totality of all the aspects that help a researcher deduce inferences, and this target population can be
categorized as finite or infinite individual aspects. A finite population is a population in which all members of the population can be counted comfortably while infinite population is a population that is not possible to count all members comfortably (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Solai ward consists of 21,315 people who became the population for this study.

Table 3.1: Nakuru County administrative units and their population sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARD</th>
<th>AREA IN KM²</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Menengai West</td>
<td>118.7</td>
<td>31,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soin</td>
<td>292.5</td>
<td>28,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visoi</td>
<td>204.9</td>
<td>35,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosop</td>
<td>197.2</td>
<td>30,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solai</td>
<td>235.8</td>
<td>21,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1049.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>147,017</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The target population for this study, therefore, was 21,315.

3.4.3. Sampling

According to Singh and Masuku, (2014) sampling involves the identification and selection of a small group of individuals from the larger population from whom the characteristics of the entire population can be generalized. Additionally, sampling involves the selection of a small percentage or a subset of people from the defined larger population aimed at representing the larger population. This study employed probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling that allowed a representative sample that was generalizable.

In order to get a representative sample, stratified sampling technique was used since the target population was heterogeneous. In this regard, the population was arranged into smaller sub-groups (strata) that were individually more homogeneous than the larger
population then people were selected from each stratum in order to make a sample. Each stratum was constructed on the basis of common characteristics. In other words, the elements in each stratum was very homogeneous and very heterogeneous between each stratum.

3.4.4 Sample Size

Masuku, (2014), opines that sample size is the number of elements from which data will be collected. The determination of sample size depends on the research type. Based on the 95% confidence level, this research will use a sample size of 1000 people.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This study used questionnaires as an instrument for collecting the required data. Abawi, (2013) argued that questionnaire is a method of collecting data involving a set of questions aimed at getting information from the respondents. Similarly, the questionnaire is a data collection instrument where recorded questions are administered to respondents for direct or prompt response without the help of the researcher. The questionnaire was distributed among the inhabitants of Solai. The questions were structured using a Likert scale with a five-point scale where the respondents were advised to establish their level of agreement or disagreement.

3.5.1 Pre-testing

In order to ensure the research questions measure what they are supposed to measure as well as seal the loopholes inherent and ensure they were in such a way as to get the intended information a pretest was done. Pretesting basically is the testing of some questions using subjects drawn from the population (Babonea & Voicu, 2008). Pretesting
is always done for reliability, to ensure the data collection instruments are appropriate and reliable. Wimmer and Dominic, (2014), recommend a 10-20% of the sample size for a pretest. This research used 20% of the sample size for a pretest exercise.

3.5.2 Reliability

This is the degree to which test scores do not have any explicit error. Also, what is inside what the researcher intends to measure, where the questionnaires are perceived as having no errors (Salkind, 2006). Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) posited that a measure is said to be reliable if the results are consistent throughout in similar situations. For reliability, all participants were given similar instructions on how to fill the questionnaire for equivalence. In the same vein, a pre-test was carried out with 20 participants and this will be tabulated for reliability coefficient.

3.5.3 Validity

This is a very significant aspect of the independent variable. Validity is the degree to which a measure exactly mirrors the elements it is supposed to measure and getting results that mirror the variable measured (Cozby, 2009). Furthermore, validity can be a measure of truth or not gotten through a particular research instrument and categorized as external as well as internal validity.

3.5.4 Internal Validity

According to Cozby, (2009) in research, internal validity is the degree to which the design provides a window for making accurate conclusions on the cause and effect relationships. In this regard, any other explanations of the findings increased the internal validity (Devlin, 2006; Cozby, 2009). According to Burns and Grove, (2001), internal
validity is the occurrence of something quite unrelated to the study but has the potential to affect the results of the study. In this study, some threats to internal validity were aspects related to (1) selective perception, which is the tendency to notice and then quickly forget instances that cause emotional discomfort and confusion which are contrary to people’s strongly held beliefs, (2) selective exposure, the tendency to only see things that are in consonance with people’s predispositions, and (3) selective retention, the tendency to remember only instances that are in line with people’s predispositions. Similarly, the method used for sample selection as well as the sample selected has the potential to influence the validity (Burns & Grove, 2001).

3.5.5 External Validity

External validity enables a study to be generalized to other settings. Random selection and ensuring that the sample selected matches the population will increase external validity. External validity can be increased if researchers ensure that factors in the internal validity do not affect external validity in any way. In terms of external validity, Burns and Grove, (2001) opined that it is the degree to which results are generalized beyond the sample used. External validity can be affected by factors like the Hawthorne effect, sampling method used, the validity of the research instrument, as well as the predictive degree of the instrument. The Hawthorn effect is the behavior eschewed by study participants due to the knowledge of involvement in a study. To minimize this, relevant information is provided to ensure that participants are not forced or coerced to respond to the questions.
3.6 Measures- Operationalization of Variables

The measure for this study were aggregated from the insights and concepts of SCCT identified from the questionnaires. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that some sections dealt with reputation and its antecedents before and after the crisis. Additionally, these reputation section covered six variables: prior reputation, current reputation, stakeholder attitudes towards the government, attitudes and view towards the crisis responsibility and crisis history. One of the goals for this study was to measure how the government responded to the crisis and how these responses affected its reputation. To gauge the government reputational standing, the participants were asked to rate their views on a five-point Likert scale. This form is indeed similar to the one employed by Coombs & Holladay, (2006) providing a platform for understanding how stakeholders perceive organizational reputation.

Additionally, the measuring instrument also encompassed measures from prior studies by Sung and Yang (2008) who defined reputation as the totality of stakeholder perception of an organization shared over a period of time. Arguably, this definition holds that the primacy of stakeholder impression of an organizational performance defines its reputation. Sung and Yang (2008) further reshaped Fombrun and Gardberg (2000) Reputation Quotient (RQ) which was designed to measure organizational reputation through an analysis of stakeholder perception of an organization based on six clear dimensions which are corporate appeal, financial well-being, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment and social responsibility.

Stakeholder perception of organizational reputation will be treated as a dependent variable.
The adoption of a relationship scale was not for assessing the relationship matrix, but to trigger production of relationship score points. These scores will range from strongly agree to strongly disagree and those equal or close to the median will be tabulated as negative while those above the median will be tabulated as positive relationship scores. The crisis response strategies were regarded as the independent variable.

3.6.1 Operationalization of Variables

This study examined four variables: crisis response strategies, attribution of responsibility, and stakeholder perception of organizational reputation.

3.6.1.1. Crisis response strategies: This study conceptualized crisis response strategies as what the organization says or does after a crisis (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). Crisis response strategy in this vein was an independent variable. It will use a measure adopted by Coombs and Schmidt, (2000).

3.6.1.2 Attribution of responsibility: In this study, attribution of crisis responsibility is operationalized as the observations and assessment of the level of responsibility and the blame attributed to an organization in the wake of a crisis. A measure designed by McAuley et al, (1992) was adopted and modified to suit this research. A 5-point Likert scale design questionnaire ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was employed: also, three items adopted from Griffin, Babin, and Darden’s (1992) work on responsibility and blame.

3.6.1.3 Stakeholder Perception of Organizational Reputation: This study defined organizational reputation as the totality of judgements, values, and beliefs concerning an organization’s intentions, abilities, history, vision, and mission strongly
embedded in the stakeholder’s mindsets (Carpenter & Krause, 2012). A 5-point Likert scale design questionnaire was employed in order to get the opinions of the public.

The measure by Fombrun (1996) and Winkleman (1999) was used measure organizational reputation on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Reputation quotient as conceptualized by (Fombrun et al., 2000) examined how a selected group of stakeholders viewed six important underlying aspects of reputation: products and services, emotional appeal, workplace environment, vision and leadership, and social responsibility. For this study, only three aspects were relevant including social responsibility, emotional appeal, and workplace environment.

3.7 Data Analysis

Kumar, (2005) postulated that analyzing data depends on the methods that were used to collect the data and for which the findings will be of great importance in providing answers to the research questions. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to statistically calculate the findings. According to Kothari, (2014) data analysis is the coding, grouping, editing, and tabulating collected data into small portions for easy examination, creating summaries, and looking for associations and relationships that exist between variables. This study used quantitative method in collecting data which was analyzed quantitatively and descriptively. The central tendency measures like mean, mode and median will be used to provide conclusive results.

3.8 Ethics and Approval

The respondents were briefed on the purpose of the research in order to prevent selective perception, which is the inherent tendency to identify and quickly forget events
or situations that trigger some discomfort either emotionally, physically or mentally which also are contrary to individual’s strongly held beliefs. Similarly, briefing was done in order to curtail selective exposure, which is the behavior that will cause the respondent to favor only information that is in consonance with held beliefs and aspirations. Emphasis was placed on not causing any harm or fear whatsoever to the respondents. Before the start of data collection, the researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the United States International University -Africa as well as the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which is mandated with the responsibility of protecting human subjects in research.

3.9 Consent Form

According to Miller and Bell, (2002), informed consent defines the right of the participants to understand what they are being involved in, and to voluntarily agree to participate or not to participate. All respondents who voluntarily accepted to participate were informed of the reason the research was being carried out before being given the questionnaire to fill. Additionally, they were clearly informed that there was no incentive for participating in the study. This form was clearly labeled and marked with the USIU-Africa logo included at the top of the form.

All participants read and understood and signed the consent form provided before beginning the exercise. The consent form explicitly indicated that all participants must be 18 years and above, residing within Solai ward and voluntarily engaged in the research without coercion. The consent form (found within the appendices of the study) clearly stated that the research being conducted is confidential, and anonymous to safeguard the
identity of the participants involved. The possible risks involved, how the researcher will safeguard against potential risks and the storage and disposal of the data was all outlined within the informed consent form.

3.10 Debrief Form

All participants were debriefed about the purposes for the research and the benefits accruing thereof. The debrief form contained information regarding confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants. Additionally, the contact information of both the researcher (Protus Akwabi Murunga) and the USIU-Africa IRB department were included within the debrief form. The debrief form was included in its entirety within the appendices.

3.11 Risk to participants and safeguards against possible risk

The risk to participants was minimal as their names, affiliations and names of colleagues were kept anonymous. Furthermore, the instruments were pre-tested to ensure that no psychological or emotional harm could emanate from the questions within exercise. Risk to participants was further avoided as all questions were open-ended and not directed at a particular subject and open to participant freedom.

3.12 Anonymity and Confidentiality

All information collected from the participants was treated with utmost confidentiality in order to avoid any psychological or physical harm. The names and contacts of all participants was not collected and before the start of the exercise they were informed not to write their names or contacts on the forms.
3.13 Storage and Disposal of Research Information

All materials pertaining to this exercise, both physical and digital scanned ones, including the consent forms were carefully safeguarded by the researcher. There were no research assistants and thus the information was securely stored in the school archives of United States International University-Africa for six months following the conclusion of the research after which they will be permanently be discarded.

3.14 Respondents demographic characteristics

Table 4.1: Respondents demographic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, many of the respondents were found to be within the age brackets of 26-30 years. This accounted for 42.2% and followed closely by those within
the age brackets of 18-25 years who had 31.1%. Additionally, those within the age brackets of 31-40 years were 133 and had 13.9 percent and came third. In the fourth position, people with 50 years and above were 81 with 8.5% and lastly those with those falling within the age brackets of 40-50 years were 42 accounting for 4.4%.

In terms of employment, majority of the respondents (355) were employed accounting for 37.1% and followed closely by self-employed (354) with 37.0 percent. Those not employed were 247 with 25.8%. For gender, female respondents were the majority at 736 and accounted for 77% while male respondents were the least represented in the survey with 23% accounting for 220.

In terms of education attainment, majority of the respondents 794 were educated with either a college certificate or university degree accounting for 83.1%. They were followed closely by those who reached secondary school level at 128 accounting for 13.4%. The least educated were those who only attained a primary school certificate with 34 accounting for 3.6%. Majority of the respondents were married people at 612 and accounting for 64%. The single people were 344 and accounting for 36%.

3.15 Summary

The main aim of this chapter was to set out the methods of testing the effectiveness of the crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. In a nutshell, methodologies designed to generate reliable data that would be effective in designing an appropriate and effective mechanism for responding to crises amicably. The findings will be so useful to crisis managers to use as a measure of reputational protection and promotion.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the crisis response strategies used by the government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy as perceived by the residents of Solai in Nakuru County, to investigate the influences of these crisis response strategies on the reputation of the government, and to establish the influences of stakeholder perception of organizational reputation. Statistical Package for Social Science research (SPSS) version 24 was used for data analysis. One thousand questionnaires were administered but 956 were completed and returned which was a response rate of 95.6%. Table 4.0 below shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

4.2 Perceived Crisis Response Strategies that were used by the Government

In the first research question, the study sought to find out the perceived crisis response strategies that were used by the government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy. According to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, there exists four types of crisis response that an organization can choose from. They include denial which encompasses an organization attacking the accuser, denying the existence of a crisis, and scapegoat, which is blaming some other person outside the organization or the organization’s inability to control the crisis. The second is the diminish strategy which involves excuse, where a crisis manager reduces the responsibility attributed to the organization or that the organization was unable to control the crisis. Justification equally falls here positing that the crisis manager struggles to reduce the damage caused by the crisis. Rebuild type of
crisis response strategies include compensation where the victims are given money or any other material benefits, and apology where the organizations accepts full crisis responsibility and requests for forgiveness. From the findings in table 4.1 below, the results show that both rebuild crisis strategies as well as diminish strategies were used.

Table 4. 2: Crisis response strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rebuild strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diminish strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the perceived crisis response strategies that were used by the government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy as perceived by the public, most of the respondents agreed that rebuild strategies and especially apology was mostly used 97%, M=1.11, SD 0.651. Equally, compensation, another rebuild strategy was also used 51%, M=3.07, SD =1.910. In addition, diminish crisis response strategies were also used where justification was used 51%, M=2.96, SD= 2.001, and excuse 39%, M=3.07. SD= 1.910. Other types of response strategies were not used, according to the respondents and they include diminish which involve excuse and justification. Equally deny strategies were also not used.

4.3 Influences of perceived crisis response strategies used by the government on stakeholder’s perception of its reputation

Research question two sought to find out how the perceived crisis response strategies used by the government influenced stakeholders’ perception of its reputation.
Influences of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation (Significance level 0.05)

**Table 4.3: Influences of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation (Significance level 0.05)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>(r) -0.144</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.144</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(p) 0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>(r) 0.078</td>
<td>0.530</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.171</td>
<td>0.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(p) 0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>(r) -0.019</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(p) 0.000</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>(r) -0.019</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(p) 0.561</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-Feelings and views towards the government

2-Respect the government

3-Trust the government

4-Government managed well

5-Government is a good employer

6-Government has good employees

7-Government supports good causes

8-Government is environmentally responsible

9-Government maintains high standards in treating its people

Pearson correlation is any number between -1 to 1 that describes the relationship that exists between an independent and a dependent variable. In the present study, using Pearson correlation with a p-value of 0.05 had the results as shown in table 4.2. In the rebuild response strategies especially apology was mostly used and when correlated with the antecedents representing organizational reputation, all the outcomes were statistically...
significant showing a relationship between the independent variable (crisis response strategy) and dependent variable (perception of government reputation).

When compensation was used, statistically significant relationships were found in the following reputational antecedents: feelings and views towards the government $r=0.078$, $p=0.016$, trust in government $r=0.078$, $p=0.016$, the government is managed well $r=0.008$, $p=0.794$, the government is a good employer $r=0.008$, $p=0.794$, government has good employees $r=-0.051$, $p=0.113$, and whether the government supports good causes $r=-0.051$, $p=0.113$. The remaining reputational antecedents had no any relationship with the crisis response used by the government and included the following: respect for the government $r=0.530$, $p=0.000$, whether the government is environmental responsive $r=-0.171$, $p=0.000$, the government has high standards on how it treats its citizens $r=-0.171$, $p=0.000$.

**4.4 Influences of stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility on organizational reputation**

Research question three sought to find out how the stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility influenced organizational reputation.

Influences of stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility on organizational reputation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame the government</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p)</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government resp</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98
1-Feelings and views towards the government
2-Respect the government
3-Trust the government
4-Government managed well
5-Government is a good employer
6-Government has good employees
7-Government supports good causes
8-Government is environmentally responsible
9-Government maintains high standards in treating its people

Similarly using Pearson correlation with a significance level of 0.05, the above table portrays the influences of stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility on government reputation. Under government blamed attribute, all outcomes were statistically significant showing an existence of a relationship between the independent variable (stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility) and the dependent variable (organizational reputation). For positive feelings and views towards the government r= -0.095, p= 0.003, for whether the stakeholders respect and admire the government r= 0.022, p= 0.498, for whether the public trust the government r= -0.023, p= 0.003, for those who felt the government is managed well r= -0.023, p= 0.468, for whether the government looks like a good employer r= -0.035, p= 0.468, on whether the government has good employees r= -0.035, p= 0.284, whether the government supports good causes r= -0.035, p= 0.284, whether the government is environmentally responsible r= 0.005, p= 0.867, whether the government maintains high standards in the way it treats the public r= 0.005, p= 0.867.
For those who felt the government should be held responsible for the crisis, only three reputational antecedents were statistically significant which encompassed the following: admire and respect the government $r = 0.066, p = 0.041$, government is environmentally responsible $r = 0.038, p = 0.238$, and the blame for the crisis solely lies with the government responsible $r = 0.038, p = 0.238$. The others were not statistically significant portraying no relationship between the independent variable (stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility) and the dependent variable (organizational reputation), encompassing feelings and views towards the government $r = 0.156$ and $p$ value of $p = 0.000$, trust in government $r = 0.156, p = 0.000$, government is managed well $r = 0.114, p = 0.000$, government is a good employer $r = 0.114, p = 0.000$, government has good employees $r = 0.142, p = 0.000$, government supports good causes $r = 0.142, p = 0.000$.

For whether the circumstances were responsible for the crisis, only two reputational antecedents showed no relationship between the independent variable (stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility) and the dependent variable (organizational reputation). They were the government has good employees $r = 0.120, p = 0.000$, and the government supports good causes $r = 0.120, p = 0.000$. The rest were statistically significant which were feelings and views towards the government was $r = -0.050, p = 0.119$, respect in government $r = 0.066, p = 0.045$, trust in government $r = -0.050, p = 0.119$, the government is managed well $r = 0.000, p = 0.994$, government looks like a good employer $r = 0.000, p = 0.994$, government is environmentally responsible $r = 0.042, p = 0.089$, and government maintains high standards in the way it treats it people $r = 0.042, p = 0.089$.

For whether the blame for the crisis solely lies with the government, two results showed no relationship between the independent variable (stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility) and the dependent variable (organizational reputation). They were the government has good employees $r = 0.120, p = 0.000$, and the government supports good causes $r = 0.120, p = 0.000$. The rest were statistically significant which were feelings and views towards the government was $r = -0.050, p = 0.119$, respect in government $r = 0.066, p = 0.045$, trust in government $r = -0.050, p = 0.119$, the government is managed well $r = 0.000, p = 0.994$, government looks like a good employer $r = 0.000, p = 0.994$, government is environmentally responsible $r = 0.042, p = 0.089$, and government maintains high standards in the way it treats it people $r = 0.042, p = 0.089$. 
responsibility) and the dependent variable (organizational reputation) and were: government has good employees \( r = -0.138 \), \( p = 0.000 \), and government supports good causes \( r = -0.138 \), \( p = 0.000 \). On the other hand, those that were statistically significant were the following: feelings and views towards the government \( r = 0.027 \), \( p = 0.404 \), respect in government \( r = 0.011 \), \( p = 0.724 \), trust in government \( r = 0.027 \), \( p = 0.404 \) which government is managed well \( r = -0.008 \), \( p = 0.803 \), government looks like a good employer \( r = -0.008 \), \( p = 0.803 \), government is environmentally responsible \( r = 0.042 \), \( p = 0.190 \), and government maintains high standards in the way it treats its people \( r = 0.042 \), \( p = 0.190 \).

### 4.5 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter has described the findings as per the research questions that guided the study. The demographics were first statically analyzed and form the findings females dominated in the employment sector as well as the most educated as compared to males, and majority were equally married than men. In general, most of the respondents agreed that rebuild response strategies were mostly used with apology being 97% utilized followed by compensation at 51%. In addition, diminish response strategies were used and specifically justification 51% was also utilized and excuse 39%. These crisis response strategies had a significant influence of the stakeholder perception of the organizational reputation since they positioned the government as a responsible and caring one. This aspect equally influenced how the stakeholders attributed crisis responsibility to the government and further affecting their view or the government reputation.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study purposed at examining the influences of the perceived crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. This chapter therefore contextualizes the key findings of the study and makes conclusions based on past literature as well as the theoretical foundations of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The study has three significant research questions that are discussed in detail. These findings will be compared and contrasted with other studies in order in the process of adding some theoretical and epistemological knowledge to the discipline of crisis communication.

5.2 Discussion

Crisis response strategies are meant to protect organizations from the damage occasioned by the crisis. A crisis injures stakeholders as well as important organizational assets like reputation which organizations depend on for survival. Research has shown that crises with very high attributions of responsibility like the Solai dam tragedy require highly accommodative strategies like rebuild and diminish strategies in order to reduce the anger inherent in the stakeholders’ minds (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Increased attributions of crisis responsibility significantly damage the reputations of organizations (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000), thus calling for highly accommodative strategies that will help vitiate the negative stakeholder reactions and behaviors. Equally, Scholars have argued that highly accommodative strategies like apology and compensation are the best to be used in preventable crises like the Solai crisis (Benoit, 1995; Sellnow, Ulmer, & Snider, 1998).
The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) described the Solai dam tragedy as one of the worst human-made disasters and the most glaring case of impunity and state negligence (KHRC, 2018. p.1). Additionally, the Solai dam crisis happened just few days after another dam in Naivasha broke its walls and overflooded into people’s farms. This history of crises increased the stakeholder attributions of responsibility for the government which required a highly accommodative crisis response strategy that would reduce the negative stakeholder perceptions of the government. This is because personal control for the crisis and crisis responsibility have been found to elicit increased anger towards organizations (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

These findings are in consonance with a study by Coombs and Holladay, (2002) who found that accommodative crisis response strategies are used in situations where the attributions of crisis responsibility are high which significantly influences organizational reputation. Also, the findings of this study corroborate those of Coombs, (1995; 1999b) in which it was established that crises with very high attribution of crisis responsibility like organization misdeeds are well addressed using highly accommodative responses like apology and compensation. In the same vein, the study’s findings mirrored that of Coombs and Holladay, (2005) study where they found that crises with stronger negative emotions need more accommodative strategies like apology and compensation. The use of these strategies shows that the government is trying to re-establish legitimacy by engaging in activities like acknowledging responsibility and compensating the victims in efforts to show conformity with their institutional environment and thus enhance legitimacy.

Research Question Two sought to find out the influences of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. The findings indicated that post crisis
communication from the government influenced how the people in Solai perceived it. The use of diminish and rebuild crisis response strategies significantly changed the stakeholders’ perception of the government because of the alleged negligence. Research shows that in crisis situations with increased attributions of crisis responsibility, organizations need to accept responsibility, apologize, and compensate the victims in order to minimize the perceived anger and negative reactions and behaviors.

SCCT holds that post-crisis communication influences perceptions of organizations which further shape the stakeholders’ judgements of these organizations as well as the negative emotions and future interactions. Coombs, (1995; 1997) opined that crisis response strategies have three main functions: (i) shape the various stakeholder attributions of a crisis (ii) change the beliefs and perceptions of the crisis and the organization in crisis and (iii) minimize the negative affect generated by the crisis. In the context of Solai dam tragedy, the use of rebuild and diminish response strategies was aimed at tilting the beliefs and the negative perceptions of the crisis and the government. Further, they were also used to demonstrate taking full responsibility for the crisis by the government thus reducing public anger.

According to Coombs, (2007), the use of justification and excuse was intended to minimize the attributions of the crisis by noting that the crisis was so serious and that it was beyond the organizations control. In the Solai tragedy, the use of justification and excuse strategies successfully helped reduce public anger significantly demonstrated by the findings. By acknowledging crisis responsibility and apologizing, the government was taking full responsibility for the crisis which called for offering material and monetary compensation to the victims in order to offset the negative feelings. In doing this, the
government was trying to re-establish its legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholders. This is because notions of increased crisis responsibility have been found to be a factor contributing to the generation of anger which positions the organization negatively. In light of the literature concerning the influence of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation, indeed crisis response strategies play a significant role in vitiating against negative stakeholder reactions and behaviors that may hurt the organization. The findings in this study corroborate findings of other studies.

Scholars agree that crises with increased attributions of responsibility adopt the use of accommodative strategies. Increased attributions of crisis responsibility always produce anger in crisis situations and this has the potential for triggering negative stakeholder behavior (Grappi & Romani, 2015). Being a preventable crisis, and the reports of leaking dam walls that were not attended to, the crisis responsibility in the Solai dam tragedy rose significantly and this coupled with the negative emotions significantly influenced the government reputation.

The perceptions of the government reputation in the eyes of the stakeholders was greatly tilted by the crisis thus the need to use strategies that reduced this anger. Increased crisis responsibility leads to reduced reputational score from the stakeholders and this calls for the application of crisis response strategies that will be helpful in reducing stakeholder anger and negative behavior intentions (Coombs and Holladay, 1996, 2001). In comparing the effects of response strategies, scholars have compared the effects of highly accommodative responses with other strategies on organizational reputation. For instance, studying apology and other crisis response strategies like having no comment, denial, excuse or even compensation, Bradford and Garrett, (1995), Dean, (2004) and Lyon and
Cameron, (1998) found that apology had the most effective and impact minimizing negative perception and impacts on the organizational reputation.

This study is in consonance with a study by Kiambi and Shafer, (2015) which established that the use of highly accommodative crisis response strategies like apology results in more favorable post-crisis evaluations. In their study, they found that in most cases, organizations that use apology experience less post crisis anger, reduced word of mouth, and negative intentions. Equally, the findings support a study by Dean, (2004) whose findings indicated that the use of apology in crisis situations produced strong reputational scores than other responses.

Research question three sought to find out the influences of stakeholder attribution of crisis responsibility on organizational reputation. Attribution of crisis responsibility has been conceptualized as the amount of blame attached on an organization (Weiner, 1986; Coombs, 2007). Each crisis type has a different level of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007). Understandably, according to the multi-agency reports, (KHRC, 2018) Solai dam tragedy would have been prevented had the calls of leaking walls been heeded. This fact makes the tragedy a preventable or intentional crisis due to the fact that the behavior of the government led to the crisis. Thus, how people attribute responsibility for a crisis to an organization will shape their perception of the reputation.

The attribution of responsibility in the Solai dam tragedy was as a result of the perceptions of the government failure to control the crisis. In preventable crises, there is increased attribution of crisis responsibility due to the belief in the stakeholders’ minds that the organization’s activities and behavior led to the crisis. SCCT posits that increased crisis responsibility negatively influences organizational reputation. This is because
stakeholders will attribute more crisis responsibility if they feel that the organization failed to prevent the crisis. Within the attribution of crisis continuum, people are bound to make more attributions on internal causes than external causes. Internal causes are crises that are caused or emanated from inside the organization while external causes are crises that originated from the outside or caused by an external agent (Weiner, 2006, 1986). Contextually, the Solai dam tragedy was perceived to be internally caused due to the failures by the government officials to heed to the calls of the cracking dam walls.

In the present study, crisis history, one of the intensifying factors, equally contributed to negative reputational score. According to Eaddy and Jin, (2017), an organization’s crisis history is significant in increasing stakeholder perception of organizational control, or how much the stakeholders believe that the organization was in a position to control the crisis. Similarly, Coombs, (2004) averred that based on SCCT, an organization’s past crises have the ability to influence the reputational threat by a current crisis if it is due to an intentional or preventable crisis.

Just before the Solai dam tragedy, another dam in Naivasha had an overflow and caused flooding in people’s farms and the environment. Coupled with the Solai tragedy, the two crises precariously position the government as caring little about the people. Additionally, Coombs, (2006) postulates that there will always be disparities in the way stakeholders attribute crisis responsibility to different crises. These disparities will be due to the way the organization has been treating its stakeholders as well as the crisis history. Relational reputation describes whether an organization has been treating its stakeholders favorably or unfavorably. If the treatment is favorable, stakeholders will attribute lesser
crisis responsibility but the attribution will be high if the treatment has been unfavorable (Coombs, 2007).

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the influences of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. In particular, the study sought to find out how the government responded to the Solai dam tragedy and the influence of this response on its reputation. The Solai dam tragedy was a crisis that was deemed by the public as a result of state negligence which eventually led to the death of close to 47 people as well as the displacement of thousands of others and property destroyed.

This increased the stakeholder’s attribution of crisis responsibility towards the government by a large margin. The public perception of the government and how it responded to the crisis generated much anger which significantly affected the reputation negatively. Two main categories of crisis response strategies were utilized by the government including rebuild response strategies (apology and compensation) as well as diminish response strategies (excuse and justification).

In responding to the crisis, the government significantly utilized apology albeit partial apology which eventually had an effect on the way the public perceive its reputation. Accommodative response strategies within the rebuild continuum were majorly used as well as the diminish strategies. These highly accommodative strategies like apology and compensation coupled with diminish response strategies are an effective blend for crises with very high attribution of crisis responsibility like the Solai tragedy. Although it was a partial apology, it was significantly effective in reducing the negative affect caused by the
crisis which was caused by negligence. It is important to note that since the Solai dam tragedy was due to avoidable mistakes, the attribution of crisis responsibility was very high calling for highly accommodative response strategies that would reduce the anger inherent within the stakeholders.

5.4 Recommendations

SCCT centers on the development of crisis response strategies that are in consonance with the crisis type based on attributions of crisis responsibility. Equally, SCCT holds that in times of a crisis, the crisis manager should critically assess the crisis situation in order to come up with the most effective and appropriate crisis response strategies. However, in this assessment of the crisis situation, most organizations fail to factor in the role of culture in the dissemination of crisis information to the stakeholders. This is because SCCT was developed and actualized within the Western culture thus its application in other cultures like Kenyan has proven problematic. In this context, it is prudent for organizations including governments to consider culture when designing crisis plans for effectiveness of crisis communication.

It is important for SCCT researchers to come up with how culture can be factored into the studies that incorporate SCCT. This is because culture plays a very important role in the way people perceive happenings in society. SCCT was fashioned within the framework of Western eyes thus fitting it well into African setting, Kenya in particular is a little bit difficult.

Additionally, due to the increasing technological advancements, the use of social media has been integrated in almost all spheres. Governments needs to integrate the use of
social media in their communication with the citizens which will also ensure when crises arise, there will be easy communication of crisis information to the public instantly. This is because social media ensures instant information transmission due to its features of ubiquity, availability, dialogic, and interactivity.

Relatedly, SCCT does not factor in the fact that a crisis can be caused by an external agent and how this can be investigated bearing in mind all the antecedents of the theory. This external agent may be either related or not related to the organization. The theory only puts into context the crises that are related to the organization in which the crisis manager is bent on protecting the reputation.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

SCCT is concerned with how the attributions of crisis responsibility affects organizational reputation and how this shape the type of crisis response strategies to be used in order to effectively and appropriately protect the organizational reputation and the stakeholders. However, how culture affects crisis communication needs to be established. In as much as globalization vouches for cultural diffusion, it is difficult to apply SCCT in Africa, specifically Kenya without encountering impediments due to cultural orientations. Future research should measure the influences of culture on crisis communication.

Additionally, further research should focus on content analysis of the different communication media in order to ascertain the crisis response strategies used by the government. This can include both traditional and social media content analysis of the strategies that were used in the wake to the Solai dam tragedy.
6.0 References


111


Coombs, T., & Holladay, S. J. (2014). How publics react to crisis communication efforts:


GOK, (2012) The economics of disaster preparedness, the Kenyan experience.


7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1. Introduction letter

Protus Murunga,
United States International University-Africa,
P.O Box 14634-00800,
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear participant,

Re: Request for participation in the research project

My names are Protus Akwabi Murunga, a graduate student at United States International University-Africa doing communication studies. I am currently doing my research proposal which examines the influence of crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. This study seeks to find out how the government responded to the Solai dam tragedy and whether this response was appropriate and effective. Since you are members of the Solai village in which this tragedy occurred, I invite you to take part in the research by answering the following questions.

This questionnaire only requires 10 minutes to complete and the response will not attract any compensation or any risk. For confidentiality, please do not write your name. Please be as honest as possible if you choose to participate in the survey since it is purely voluntary. Copies of the questionnaires will be given to the United States International University-Africa Library. Thank you very much for understanding and taking time to participate in the survey. As an ethical expectation, the information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for research purposes. For a copy of the proposal, please fill free to ask the researcher through prottusmurunga@gmail.com.

Kind regards,

Protus Akwabi Murunga
7.2 Appendix 2: Research instrument (Questionnaire)

Debrief form

The influences of perceived crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. A case of Solai dam tragedy in Kenya

Thank you so much for taking time to participate in this study. This study is about how the government of Kenya responded to the Solia dam tragedy and how the stakeholders, the people residing in Solia, perceive this response as well as the government itself. This is in reference to the fact that on the 9th of May 2018, the walls of one of the eight dams owned by the Patel group broke its banks and the raging waters swept away the whole village of Solai, leaving close to 47 people dead and scores injured. Reports indicated that there were warning signs prior to the crisis but they were never attended to leading to what was termed ad the worst form of corporate impunity.

With this in mind, this research aims at examining the response strategies the government used to save lives in Solia as well as compensate the victims. It is prudent to get first-hand information from the victims who themselves know where the shoe pinched most. Whether the government responded to their satisfaction is what is needed from these questions. The research questions include: What response strategies were used by the Kenya government in the wake of the Solai dam tragedy? How did the response strategies employed by the Kenya government affect stakeholder’s perception of it? Was the government responsible for the crisis?

All information collected from the participants will be treated with utmost confidentiality in order to avoid any psychological or physical harm. The names and contacts of all participants will not be collected and before the start of the exercise they will be informed not to write their names or contacts on the forms. All materials pertaining to this exercise, both physical and digital scanned ones, including the consent forms will be carefully safeguarded by the researcher. There will be no research assistants and thus the information will be securely stored in the school archives of United States International University-Africa for six months following the conclusion of the research after which they will be permanently be discarded. A copy of the finished research school library for any reference by any one.

Protus Murunga,
United States International University-Africa,
P.O Box 14634-00800,
Nairobi, Kenya.
protusmurunga@gmail.com
0701027594
7.3 Appendix 3: Confidentiality Agreement

The influence of perceived crisis response strategies on organizational reputation. A case of Solia dam tragedy in Kenya

I, _______________________________, the _______________________________

I agree to;

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. after analyzing and tabulating the responses, I will erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project.

_________________________________  _______________________________  _______________________
(Name)  (Signature)  (Date)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board (Institutional Review Board) at the United States International University. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 0730 116 000+254.730.116.000 +254.730.116.690 30.116.000
7.4 Appendix 4: Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

My names are Protus Murunga, a master student at United States International University- Africa. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study which aims at gathering data as part of my master’s thesis. Before you begin, please take a few minutes to read why I am inviting you to participate and what will be done with the information you provide. You will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire that aims to investigate the perceived crisis response strategies that were used by the Kenya government in the wake of the Solai tragedy. Please feel free to stop at any moment if you feel uncomfortable or you have any question concerning the study. Further, your individual privacy as well as confidentiality of the information you provide will be maintained in all written and published data. The study is anonymous and your participation will take about five minutes. Please be informed that your participation is voluntary and you have unrestricted right to withdraw from the study without any penalty. At no point will your personal identity be needed and no risks are involved in the study, whether physical or emotional. In addition, the study is not beneficial to the respondents and no incentive will be given out for participation.

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Attribution of crisis responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I think the government should be blamed for the tragedy in Solai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think the government should be held responsible for the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Circumstances, not the government, are responsible for the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The blame for the crisis solely lies with the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder perception of organizational reputation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I have a good feeling and views about the government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Response</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis response strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The government regretted over the Solai dam tragedy and apologized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The government took action based stance to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The government took stern action towards the dam owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government helped those affected financially and materially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Word-of-mouth communication intentions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I will talk positively about the government to other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I will encourage other people to trust the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will discourage other people from trusting the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will talk negative things about the government to other people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Age: 18-24 [ ] 25-30 [ ] 31-40 [ ] 41-50 [ ] 51 and over [ ]

2. Employment status. Employed [ ]
   Self-employed [ ]
   Not employed [ ]

3. Gender. Male [ ]
   Female [ ]

4. Level of education. Primary [ ]
   Secondary [ ]
   College [ ]
   University [ ]
   Other [ ]

5. Marital status. Single [ ]
   Married [ ]
   Divorced [ ]
7.5 Appendix 5: Consent Form

Consent Form to Participate in Research

I have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Protus Akwabi Murunga. protusmurunga@gmail.com, 0701027594 of United States International University-Africa.

Introduction: Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of my rights as a research participant. In accordance with the policies of United States International University-Africa, I have been asked to read this information carefully. If I agree to participate, I will sign in the space provided to indicate that I have read and understood the information furnished on this consent form. I am entitled to and will receive a signed copy of this form.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate how the government of Kenya responded to the Solia dam tragedy and how the stakeholders, the people residing in Solia, perceive this response as well as the government itself. This is in reference to the fact that on the 9th of May 2018, the walls of one of the eight dams owned by the Patel group broke its banks and the raging waters swept away the whole village of Solai, leaving close to 47 people dead and scores injured. Reports indicated that there were warning signs prior to the crisis but they were never attended to leading to what was termed as the worst form of corporate impunity.

Duration and location of study: If I agree to participate in this study, my participation will last for approximately 5 minutes and will take place at Solai Ward, Nakuru County.

Procedures: During this study, I will be asked to my level of agreement of disagreement concerning what I saw and felt in the wake of the Solai tragedy.

Potential risks and discomforts: Due to the severity of the tragedy, there is risk of selective exposure, as well as selective retention. This entails some participants not being comfortable remembering unpleasant moments that are not in consonance with their beliefs.

Benefits: A benefit to me of participating in this study is an increased understanding of how research is conducted.

Confidentiality: I understand the data collected in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Specifically, the researcher will use a code number instead of my name on my data sheet. The code number and names will be kept separately from each other in a secure location. After six years all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Compensation for participation: I will receive “no reimbursement” for my participation in this study.

Right to refuse or withdraw: I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or discontinue my participation at any time; there will be no penalty for doing so. Some details of this project may not be made known to me until my session
is completed. I realize at the completion of the session that I have the option of withholding the responses I have provided from subsequent analysis. I also understand that the researcher has the right to withdraw me from participation in the study at any time.

**Offer to answer questions:** If I have any questions about this study, I may call the researcher, Protus Akwabi Murunga, prottusmurunga@gmail.com 0701027594. If I have questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact the United States International University-Africa, IRB at admin@usi.ac.ke or 0730 116 000 +254.730.116.000 +254.730.116.690 30.116.000

I certify that I am at least 18 years old and I agree to participate in this research project.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Person obtaining consent: |
| I have allowed the individual named above the time to read this consent form and have answered any questions that have been asked. I will provide the participant with a copy of this consent form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
7.6 Appendix 6: NACOSTI Certificate
18th October, 2018

Protus Akwabi Murunga
School of Communication, Cinematics & Creative Arts
protusmurunga@gmail.com
USIU-A/IRB/37-18

Dear Mr. Murunga,

**IRB-RESEARCH APPROVAL.**

The USIU-A IRB has reviewed and granted an ethical approval for the research proposal titled “Influences of Crisis Response Strategies on Organizational Reputation: A Case of Solai Dam Tragedy.”

The approval is for **twelve months** from the date of IRB. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A mid-term report and a final report must be provided to the IRB within the twelve months approval period. All records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

You are advised to follow the approved methodology and report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Should you or study participants have any queries regarding IRB’s consideration of this project, please contact irb@usiu.ac.ke.

Sincerely,

Prof. Amos Njuguna,
IRB chair and Dean – School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension
Tel: 730 116 442
Email: annjuguna@usiu.ac.ke