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**PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING
TRANSPARENCY IN UGANDA'S OIL AND GAS SECTOR: A CASE OF
KINGFISHER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

BY

LYDIA AINOMUGISHA

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DECLARATION

I, Lydia Ainomugisha, hereby declare that this research report titled, '*Participatory Communication as a Tool for Enhancing Transparency in Uganda's Oil and Gas Sector: A Case of Kingfisher Development Project*' is my original work and has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any academic award.

I further declare that where I have used ideas from other scholars, I have provided appropriate citations to acknowledge their work.

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Signed:.....

Date: ...

LYDIA AINOMUGISHA

APPROVAL

I, Prof. Goretti Linda Nassanga, do certify that this research report titled, '*Participatory Communication as a Tool for Enhancing Transparency in Uganda's Oil and Gas Sector: A Case of Kingfisher Development Project*' has been prepared and submitted for examination by Lydia Ainomugisha under my guidance, supervision and approval.

Signed: 

Date: 

PROF. GORETTI LINDA NASSANGA

(Supervisor)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CLOs	Community Liaison Officers
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CSCO	Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CUL	CNOOC Uganda Limited
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KFDA	Kingfisher Development Area
KFDP	Kingfisher Development Project
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
LC	Local Council
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAPs	Project-Affected Persons
PAU	Petroleum Authority of Uganda
PC	Participatory Communication
PLC	Project Life Cycle
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PRCA	Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNOC	Uganda National Oil Company
VAW	Violence Against Women

ABSTRACT

This research aimed at exploring how participatory communication can be used as a tool for enhancing transparency in Uganda's oil and gas sector, focusing on the Kingfisher Development Project. Two theories; social cognitive theory and stakeholder theory, were used as a guide. The study was premised on three objectives: to review the existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project; to analyze the level of stakeholder participation in the process of message development at Kingfisher Development Project; and to establish the effect of the existing channels of communication on stakeholder behaviour patterns at Kingfisher Development Project. The study employed an exploratory research design with a qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted with 22 respondents, and focus group discussions were held with 53 community members affected by the project. Data were analyzed using the ATLAS.ti qualitative software. After transcribing and coding the data, network schematic diagrams were developed. The study found that the Kingfisher Development Project relies heavily on Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) for communication between project implementers and local communities. While this method ensures clarity, it often leads to delays resulting from following the formal channels. Respondents stressed the need for using social media and traditional methods to engage diverse community members. Although grievances committees exist, their slow response times push community members to seek media support. The current communication approach lacks appeal and inclusivity, reducing trust and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, lack of understanding among civil society organisations (CSOs) impedes collaboration and intensifies conflicts, often stemming from feelings of exclusion in decision-making processes. To resolve these challenges, the study suggests training CLOs to deliver accurate and timely information, as well as promoting participatory communication by engaging community members in decision-making and organizing regular feedback sessions.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Participatory communication plays a crucial role in advancing public projects that address people's needs and interests while ensuring their legitimacy and effectiveness (Servaes, 2021). This study examined how participatory communication can enhance transparency in public projects, with a focus on the Kingfisher Development Project in Uganda's oil and gas sector. It also explored the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing participatory communication in practice, offering recommendations to improve its effectiveness. This chapter presents the introduction, background, problem statement, objectives, significance, the scope of the study and the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Background to the Study

Participatory communication (PC) emphasises involving people in all stages of communication in a development project. This approach contrasts with traditional methods, where projects are mainly carried out with external support and the beneficiaries remain passive recipients of the final outcome (Incio et al., 2021; Lebenya et al., 2024). This novel method of PC establishes a mechanism focused on commitment, information and knowledge sharing, and trust in development projects. By emphasising people's active participation, it opens a space where communities can determine their futures, meet their unique needs, create solutions, and implement desired changes (Sagiv et al., 2022). This strategy enables direct community involvement and promotes transparency and accountability by ensuring that projects meet the specific needs of the local population.

The participatory communication approach has dominated the field of development communication since the 1970s, when Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, proposed the replacement of the pedagogical system with a more liberating type of communication that would contain more dialogue, be more receiver-centred and more conscious of social structure (Freire,

1970). The concept has been integrated fully in the development field since the 1990s (Jacobson & Storey, 2004), leading to the discourse on the ideal meaning of participation and application challenges. On the other hand, transparency is a communicative process aimed at providing citizens with information that will encourage their participation in public affairs (Rodríguez-Navas et al., 2021).

Transparency is a process aimed at informing citizens to encourage their involvement in public matters (Bertot et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it often gets reduced to a legally mandated administrative procedure (Rodríguez-Navas et al., 2021). Yet, transparency is a continual process, as public institutions constantly generate new information that must be communicated while it is current, relevant and useful (Konovalova & Savchina, 2019). By treating transparency as a communicative process, the recipients of information become visible and assume a decisive role, as it has been established that without their participation, there is no transparency (Rodríguez-Navas & Breijo, 2019; Rodríguez-Navas et al., 2021). Moreover, participatory communication improves transparency by actively engaging communities in decision-making processes, ensuring that information is always current, relevant and valuable. This involvement fosters true transparency by making the receivers visible and giving them an important role (Sagiv et al., 2022)).

Participatory communication has been used to advance development, social change and community empowerment in several African countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa (Anani-Bossman & Blankson, 2023; Hassan, 2021; Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010). For instance, a study conducted in Taraba State, Nigeria, using the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP), explored how community members' and beneficiaries' interest, participation and involvement in the planning and implementation of programmes aimed at reducing poverty could expedite the process. The study found that community members actively planned and executed the CSDP micro-projects in their communities, and the successful completion of these projects positively impacted the lives of the community members (Gambo & Simon, 2017). Similarly, Anani-Bossman and Blankson observed that participatory communication helped achieve inclusivity, as the efforts addressed the needs and expectations of the affected communities in the Access Project in Ghana. Finally, Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) found that the participatory

communication approach is regarded as critical for development at the local government level and is being successfully applied by the local municipality in South Africa.

Like many countries, Uganda has embraced the public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement to tackle infrastructural challenges. While there have been notable successes, such as the construction of the Entebbe Express Highway, several PPPs have fallen short of achieving their intended goals (Magoola et al., 2023). One reason cited for the failure of PPPs in Uganda is the marginalisation of community stakeholders. Often, these key stakeholders are excluded from decision-making processes, which undermines trust-building and, consequently, the performance of PPP projects (Mwesigwa et al., 2019). Uganda has implemented PPPs in the oil and gas sector, with prominent players including TotalEnergies, CNOOC, Vivo Energy, Nile Energy and Hass Petroleum. These partnerships aim to harness the private sector's expertise and resources to address infrastructure concerns (Yaledi, 2021). The subject of this study, the Kingfisher Development Project, is itself a PPP collaboration of CNOOC Uganda Ltd, TotalEnergies, Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) and the public.

Interestingly, many research scholars have noted that participatory communication is important in enhancing the acceptance of public-private partnerships (Aleksandrov & Dybtsyna, 2024; Dikeocha, 2024; Gregory & Yudarwati, 2024). Participation of the people in public projects is not new in Uganda, as it has been given grounding by the national constitution of 1995 as one of the principles of governance. Servaes (2021) highlighted that participatory communication integrates concepts within a multiplicity framework, underscoring the significance of cultural identity, democratisation and involvement at all levels for local communities. This approach focuses on empowering citizens by actively involving them in identifying problems, developing solutions, and implementing strategies (Aleksandrov & Dybtsyna, 2024; Dikeocha, 2024; Gregory & Yudarwati, 2024; Melkote & Singhal, 2021; Tacchi & Tufte, 2020).

The Kingfisher Development Project in the Kikuube district of Uganda has become a significant development area, being part of a joint venture oil and gas exploration campaign conducted by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) in partnership with French major TotalEnergies and the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC). This project is a critical \$15 billion

initiative to explore and extract oil reserves beneath Lake Albert. It involves the construction of infrastructure such as oil pads, pipelines and other facilities. However, local communities have complained about the implementation of the project due to inadequacy of community engagement and project ownership, which has caused problems such as forced evictions, intimidation and violence by security forces (International Federation for Human Rights, 2024). The locals have been coerced into selling their lands at low prices, disrupting their livelihoods. There are also accusations of environmental degradation and pollution (Ashaba, 2021).

Further, in June 2019, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) conducted public hearings for the Kingfisher Development Area draft Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in the districts of Kikuube and Hoima, where it was noted that there was a failure to adequately incorporate stakeholder inputs (CSCO, 2021). Following this, the Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas (CSCO), after consulting with the general public, made recommendations on how to improve the draft ESIA in areas such as resettlement, livelihood improvement, waste management and pollution control, among others. However, despite these inputs, the KFDA ESIA was approved using an outdated 2018 version that did not incorporate comments from stakeholders (CSCO, 2021). This oversight highlights the importance of participatory communication in ensuring that a project is transparent and credible, as genuine community engagement forms the foundation of addressing environmental and social concerns. This current study seeks to establish how participatory community involvement can enhance transparency in the Kingfisher Development Area by assessing local community participation in communication and decision-making processes, and their influence on trust, accountability and project outcomes.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Participatory communication has increasingly been recognized as a cornerstone for fostering accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in large-scale development projects. It provides local communities with platforms to voice concerns, offer feedback, and influence project outcomes, thereby ensuring that implementers remain socially responsible (de Paula Pereira et al., 2024; Incio et al., 2021; Lee & Li, 2021). Evidence from other contexts demonstrates its importance: Adetola et al. (2024) found that participatory communication frameworks were vital for sustainable

agricultural productivity in Nigeria, while Topoti (2022) highlighted its role in successful resettlement projects in Kenya. Similarly, Singirankabo and Wanjiku (2023) linked participatory communication to improved cost efficiency, project schedules, and quality in Rwanda's NGO-led initiatives. In Uganda, Agaba and Turyasingura (2023) examined participatory project implementation and sustainability of government-funded projects in Kabale district and found that participatory project implementation has a favourable impact on the effectiveness of the Parish Development Model programme.

In Uganda's oil and gas sector, several scholars have examined related but distinct dimensions of participation and stakeholder engagement. Kisubi (2024) explored environmental justice and the participation of local communities in decision-making within the upstream sub-sector, emphasizing governance challenges and offering recommendations for policymakers and legal practitioners. Mukiibi (2024) investigated stakeholder engagement in petroleum extraction, identifying both challenges and opportunities for mitigating environmental risks through inclusive practices. Kaitesi (2020) analyzed the legal framework governing multi-stakeholder engagement in extractive industries, focusing on Uganda's regulatory regimes and their implications for participation. These studies provide valuable insights into environmental justice, stakeholder engagement, and legal frameworks, but they primarily emphasize governance structures, legal regimes, and broad stakeholder dynamics.

A critical empirical gap remains regarding the role of participatory communication in enhancing transparency within specific oil and gas projects in Uganda. Existing studies have not sufficiently examined how communication strategies such as feedback mechanisms, information-sharing platforms, and dialogue processes directly influence transparency and accountability at the project level. For instance, Yaledi (2021) noted loopholes in legislation affecting local participation, but did not address how communication practices themselves shape transparency outcomes.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the current state of communication at the Kingfisher Development Project. It aims to identify effective participatory communication approaches that can strengthen transparency, foster trust between stakeholders, and ensure that local communities are meaningfully engaged in Uganda's oil and gas sector.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General objective

To explore how participatory communication can foster transparency in the Kingfisher Development Project and recommend appropriate communication interventions.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The study's specific objectives were:

1. To establish the existing communication structures in the Kingfisher Development Project.
2. To analyze the level of stakeholder participation in the process of message development in the Kingfisher Development Project.
3. To establish how stakeholders utilize the existing communication channels in the Kingfisher Development Project.

1.5 Research Questions

The study's research questions were:

1. What are the existing communication structures used in the Kingfisher Development Project?
2. How do stakeholders participate in the process of message development in the Kingfisher Development Project?
3. How do stakeholders utilise the existing communication channels in the Kingfisher Development Project?

1.6 Scope of Study

The scope of this study delineates the breadth of the study in terms of content, time, and geography. These are explained in the sections below.

1.6.1 Content scope

The study focused on examining the existing communication structures in the Kingfisher Development Project, analysing the process of message development within the project, and establishing how people utilise the existing communication structures. Further, organisational

materials from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, Uganda National Oil Company, and China National Offshore Oil Corporation were reviewed.

1.6.2 Geographical scope

The study was carried out in Kikuube district. Kikuube district is found in Uganda's Western region, named after its main town, Kikuube. It was carved out of the southwestern portion of Hoima district on July 1, 2008. Kikuube Town is approximately 25 kilometres (16 miles) southwest of Hoima City, the only city in the Bunyoro sub-region. Kikuube is approximately 215 kilometres (134 miles) northwest of Kampala, Uganda's capital and largest city. Kikuube district is bordered to the north and east by Hoima district, to the southeast by Kakumiro district, to the south by Kibaale district and Kagadi district, to the southwest by Ntoroko district, and to the west by Lake Albert and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As of 2020, the district's population was estimated to be 358,700 people, with approximately 89.5 percent living in rural areas.

1.6.3 Time scope

The study was carried out from November 2023 and completed by October 2024. Documents about participatory communication from 2006 to 2023 were reviewed because this is the time that viable oil and gas reserves were confirmed in the Western region of Uganda.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is envisaged to be of great value to various stakeholders, especially the following groups or functions:

1.7.1 National policy development and regulation

Utilising findings and recommendations of this study, institutions such as Uganda's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Kukuube district local government and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda can come up with policies that enhance fair and equitable participation of the local community in the oil and gas sector. There should thus exist efficient monitoring of communication systems and setting up standard practices in participatory communication.

1.7.2 Kikuube community

The research findings should inform residents on how they can best participate in the oil and gas project, and benefit financially through initiatives such as local content. Furthermore, it will provide them with an opportunity to express their displeasure with the authorities.

1.7.3 Researchers

The research will also create new knowledge in the oil and gas field relating to attaining transparency through participatory communication. The study will provide the basis for future research and provide literature for future review. The study will add to the body of knowledge on participatory communication, which is an important tool to achieving transparency and efficiency.

1.7.4 Potential investors

The findings of this research will be vital to any potential investor wishing to enter the oil and gas sector industry in Uganda, as well as the current players in the market industry as it will provide information on how to remain competitive across a longer time horizon.

1.8 Operational Definitions

1.8.1 Participatory communication

Participatory communication is derived from the words participation and communication.

Participation refers to having the community/listeners/audience voluntarily involved in the programme or activity that is slated for them (Manyozo, 2007). Participation involves communities engaging in the programming and running of the communication channel (Carpentier et al., 2001).

Therefore, participatory communication can be defined as a process that is built on dialogical processes to enable the local people to exert a level of commitment, ownership and control of the development process (Manyozo, 2007).

Participatory communication, therefore, aims to empower communities to be involved in their own development initiatives, a practice that can act as a source of income while generating skills for community members (Lebenya et al., 2024).

1.8.2 Transparency

Transparency is a communicative process whose aim is to provide citizens with information that will promote their participation in public affairs (Rodríguez-Navas et al., 2021).

1.8.3 Oil and gas sector

Oil and gas are known as fossil fuels because they are formed from the decomposition and pressurisation of algae, plankton and other organisms. This process forms hydrocarbons, which are compounds consisting entirely of hydrogen and carbon that are powerful combustible fuels.

An oil rig is a structure above an oil well on land or in the sea that has special equipment attached to it for drilling and removing oil from the ground. — also called an oil platform.

1.8.4 Kingfisher Development Project

The Kingfisher Development Project is a major oil and gas project in Uganda, located in the Kikuube district, southeast of Lake Albert. CNOOC Uganda Limited manages the project, with TotalEnergies EP Uganda and Uganda National Oil Company as joint venture partners. The project aims to produce 40,000 barrels of crude oil per day from 31 wells on four well pads and transport it via a 46-kilometre feeder pipeline to the export hub and refinery in Kabaale, in Hoima district. A central processing facility, a lake water abstraction station and other supporting infrastructure are also part of the project (OAG, 2022).

1.9 Structure of Dissertation

This research report is divided into six chapters. The first chapter discusses the study's introduction and background, the problem statement, the study's purpose, the research objective, the significance of the study and research organisation. The second chapter is devoted to literature review. It is concerned with concept definitions, theoretical and empirical literature reviews and research gaps. The third chapter details the methodology by highlighting the study area, research design, target population, sampling procedures and sample size. It further presents sources of data, data collection methods, data analysis, data interpretation and presentation, validity and reliability of the research instruments, and ethical considerations. Chapters four and five present the research findings, and interpretation and discussion of the findings with a focus on participatory communication to foster transparency in the Kingfisher Development Project in Kikuube district.

Chapter six presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review, critique and synthesize the available literature on the topic in an integrated framework. In reviewing the literature for this current study, I start with the theoretical review and end with the empirical review.

2.1.1 Perspectives on participatory communication

The term participatory communication refers to a dialogue-based method that promotes the free flow of ideas, information and insight among those involved, and empowering everyone, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009). A participatory communication approach can help in communicating social processes, decision-making processes, and transformation processes in new ways. Incorporating local knowledge and skills into the process allows participants to think critically and develop their solutions (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). Increased participatory communication may help a community reach an agreement and accept responsibility for resolving a contentious social problem. According to Dos Santos (2018), participatory communication involves the continuous interaction and dialogue between the source of information and the receiver of the information. It encourages constructive thinking about the situation, identifies developmental needs and challenges, determines necessary actions to improve the situation, and actively works to implement those solutions.

Participatory communication emphasises objectivity as a critical factor for its success, especially in rural communities of developing countries (Dikeocha, 2024). Trust plays a vital role in development interventions, but it does not emerge spontaneously. It is the responsibility of participatory communication to establish an environment conducive to fostering trust (Harris, 2022). In a related study, Ezezika et al. (2012) affirm that trust among the partners and with the community has been identified as an important element of effective public-private partnerships (PPPs). Factors affecting the establishment, development and maintenance of interpersonal and inter-organisational trust can either ensure or compromise the success of agbiotech projects. Agbiotech PPPs often face scepticism and resistance due to the public's lack of trust in genetically engineered crops and livestock, and the involvement of the private sector (Lukanda, 2020).

Engaging the community, whether through taking on leadership roles or providing feedback, is crucial for partners to understand community needs and strengths. PPPs are valuable in various fields such as public infrastructure, health and emergency management. Past road subsector reforms have had limited effect on road infrastructure improvement and development because of lack of resource capacities and because of compromised governance systems and practices (Mugarura, 2019). Public sector participants should, therefore, include emergency management

officials from all levels of government and representatives from the Department of Children and Family Services. Private sector participants should comprise representatives from NGOs, faith-based and community-based organisations, community leaders, childcare providers, schools, healthcare organisations and individual youth representatives. One method PPPs can use to focus on children's needs is by reviewing guidance and employing tools such as the Community Preparedness Index (Osei-Kyei et al., 2024).

Participatory communication helps in the improvement of public-private partnerships through the creation of an enabling environment where stakeholders from both sectors can freely share their views, insights and ideas on how best to meet community needs (Gbadago, 2020). This approach ensures that all voices, especially those from marginalized groups, are heard and taken into consideration in decision-making processes, leading to more inclusive and effective outcomes. Incorporating participatory communication, PPPs can know and prioritize communities' needs to a greater level, especially concerning public infrastructure, healthcare, or emergency management. Such a collaborative approach will help achieve better project deliverables, creating community ownership and hence greater sustainability of initiatives (Chirwa, 2023; Hu, 2022).

Incorporating people or communities into change initiatives is the focus of participatory communication, which is concerned with creating and executing communication tools, channels, strategies and tactics in initiatives aimed at advancement, development or change. Participation in the African context suggests that individuals are actively involved in development programmes and processes; they make suggestions, take the initiative, and articulate their own needs and concerns (Hu, 2022).

2.1.2 Importance of stakeholder participation in enhancing transparency

Stakeholder participation is an integral part of fostering agreement within an organisation/ project (Coleman et al., 2019). When stakeholder involvement is sufficient, it promotes a positive commitment between the organisation and its employees. Through integration and socialisation within the organisation, employees adopt its culture and values, motivating them to dedicate their time, skills and energy to benefit the organisation (Röckmann et al., 2017). This, in turn, unlocks their creative potential, driving success and enhancing the organisation's performance.

Initially, Appreciative Democratic Communication was seen as legitimate due to the extensive involvement of stakeholders at every stage of the entrepreneurial process. Stakeholder participation not only fosters legitimacy but also offers additional advantages, such as encouraging others to contribute resources (Smith & Woods, 2015). Conversely, limited participation can lead to problems of poor representativeness and reduced legitimacy. Recognising stakeholders is essential since meeting their expectations is closely tied to achieving legitimacy (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020).

Stakeholder participation is vital for enhancing transparency as it fosters accountability, trust and openness in decision-making processes (Kemei, 2022). By involving stakeholders, such as employees, customers, community members and investors, in planning, implementation and evaluation stages, organisations ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, reducing information asymmetry and potential conflicts (Ktori et al., 2025). This collaborative approach not only improves communication but also encourages regular feedback, enabling organisations to address concerns and align with stakeholder expectations. Ultimately, active participation builds credibility and legitimacy, strengthening relationships and ensuring more transparent operations (Ktori et al., 2024).

2.2 How Participatory Communication Has Enhanced Acceptance of PPP Projects

Boyer (2019) examined USA-based public opinion data to assess the influence of different modes of participation on citizens' perceptions of public-private partnerships (PPPs). The study found that while information dissemination can improve community support for PPPs, interactive engagement is more crucial and likely necessary to assure citizens that projects align with their interests, an issue central to the long-term sustainability of PPPs. Both information dissemination and interactive engagement are key components of participatory communication. Contrary to expectations, respondents expressed a preference for meetings with private sector representatives over those with public sector counterparts, suggesting that citizen-direct relationships are vital for holding third-party providers accountable. Therefore, participatory communication plays a key role in enhancing the acceptance of PPPs (Lebenya et al., 2024).

In a related study, Nederhand and Klijn (2016) found that although trustful relationships between actors enhance the inclusion of societal parties, the presence of a flexible contract leads to greater

citizen involvement. Their study further revealed that stakeholder participation tends to generate more innovative projects, though this does not necessarily translate into better-performing projects. Specifically, they examined the degree to which citizens and societal stakeholders are involved in PPP projects, the factors that account for their involvement, and the effects on project performance and innovativeness in Dutch PPPs.

In another study, Ajith et al. (2022) conducted research on the Community-Based Clean Drinking Water Solution. This solution was implemented in over 250 Indian communities, each with varying cultural, behavioural, socio-economic, educational, political, water quality, accessibility and spatial characteristics. The initiative involved designing and deploying unique modular water purification technologies in collaboration with each community. The deployments were enhanced by extensive community engagement, capacity building and community-specific business models. The PPP model ensured scalability and sustainability through the active involvement of the community, local government, universities and NGOs.

Boyer and Van Slyke (2019) analysed public opinion data from 2014 to identify factors influencing public attitudes toward public-private partnerships (PPPs). Their study revealed that public attitudes towards PPPs are complex: people tend to support PPPs when they have a positive perception of the business sector and when they trust the government. Consequently, PPPs are viewed not as substitutes for public administration but as collaborative models that require both public and private entities to be competent and trustworthy. Additionally, their study uncovered a previously unexplored link between familiarity with PPPs and positive attitudes towards them. Interestingly, it found that increased familiarity with PPPs leads to more favourable views.

In Kenya, Kimosop (2013) found that a baseline survey conducted by KIPPRA in 2006 on the impact of the seven devolved funds (including the CDF) revealed significant challenges, preventing them from reaching their full potential. One key issue identified was the lack of participatory communication. Over 90% of respondents reported that they were not involved in setting up the development agenda for their areas. The study emphasised that awareness and information are crucial for effective public participation. It also noted that participatory communication strategies were not implemented in the management of the CDF in Baringo Central

Constituency, and that various challenges and legal obstacles continued to hinder participatory communication in managing the CDF.

In Uganda, Magoola et al. (2023) provided the initial evidence of the relationship between the community and public-private partnership (PPP) projects by focusing on community engagement, trust and performance. This study was cross-sectional; and thus, monitoring changes in behaviour over time was not possible. The study used a quantitative research approach, which limited respondents from expressing their feelings fully. Their study indicated that trust and community engagement are significantly associated with the performance of PPP projects. Their findings are important for PPP projects to understand the role public participation plays in the performance of PPP projects (See also Mugarura, 2019). In a related study, Agaba and Turyasingura (2023) noted that participatory project implementation has a favourable impact on the effectiveness of the Parish Development Model programme in Kabale district. The fundamental conclusion of their study was that the success of a Parish Development Model project is significantly influenced by the implementation of participatory communication.

Thus, the current study hypothesises that participatory communication enhances acceptance of PPP projects.

2.3 Profile of the Case Study: Kingfisher Development Project

The Kingfisher Development Area (KFDA) project involves establishing a Central Processing Facility (CPF) capable of processing 40,000 barrels of oil per day. The processed oil will be transported to Kabaale via a 10-inch diameter feeder pipeline, which is 48km long. The project also includes over 18km of buried flowlines, a Lake Water Abstraction Station, and supporting infrastructure such as camps, a support base, a materials yard, a safety checkpoint, a jetty and access roads. It features one onshore oilfield located on the shores of Lake Albert in Kikuube district, with 568 million barrels in place and 186 million barrels recoverable.

The China National Offshore Oil Corporation Uganda Ltd (CUL) operates KFDA on behalf of Joint Venture Partners; namely TotalEnergies (56.67%), Uganda National Oil Company (15%) and CUL (28.33%) (UNOC, 2020, page 35). Development will involve onshore drilling of 31 wells from four pads over five years using one drilling rig (Ashaba, 2021).

The Kingfisher oil field impacted 680 households, or roughly 2,949 individuals. In sum, the oil fields and pipeline directly impacted the land of roughly 120,000 individuals (UNOC, 2018). Additionally, workers on the Kingfisher project have endured exploitative conditions, including excessive working hours, inadequate wages, hazardous working environments and demands for bribes to secure employment. Activists and environmental defenders opposing the Kingfisher and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline projects have faced violence, mistreatment, torture, arbitrary arrests and, even, disappearances at the hands of the Ugandan military. Despite this climate of fear, courageous human rights, environmental and climate defenders continue to speak out, often facing further violence and arrests. The fisherfolk have reported oil slicks and dead fish in Lake Albert, and devastating local livelihoods, while whistleblowers within CNOOC's subcontractors have exposed illegal dumping of oil and chemicals into the lake and surrounding areas. The Kingfisher Development Project has caused severe ecological degradation, including water pollution, soil contamination and destruction of natural habitats. Projections from the Climate Accountability Institute indicate that the Kingfisher oil project will generate 379 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over 25 years, with annual peak emissions surpassing the combined totals of Uganda and Tanzania, posing severe risks to global climate stability and being incompatible with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C (Pokhrel, 2024; page 8).

Communities have been forcibly displaced by Ugandan security forces. Many residents were given only hours to vacate their homes and fled with what they could carry, resulting in the loss of their homes, livestock and other assets. Residents who resisted inadequate compensation offers faced threats, intimidation and coercion, ultimately being forced to relinquish their land. Despite CNOOC's commitment to adhere to international standards, including the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) guidelines on land acquisition and resettlement, the reality on the ground is starkly different. Many community members have received no compensation for their land, homes or other assets. Those who did receive compensation report that it was too inadequate to enable them to maintain their standard of living (Pokhrel, 2024).

Other than the Kingfisher project, CNOOC and TotalEnergies are both involved in other oil and gas projects around the world. CNOOC is operating in the North Sea, Brazil and the United States

of America, while TotalEnergies has projects in Nigeria, Angola and Mozambique. Many of these projects also face identical challenges of bad environmental impact, human rights and community relations (CNOOC, 2024; TotalEnergies, 2024).

The communications of both companies are pegged on three key messages: transparency, community involvement and sustainability. Each is often performing ESIA studies or public consultations and stakeholder meetings, even publishing periodic sustainability reports and active communication channels on the concerns and updates of the projects. These projects, in turn, have a very high economic impact, with investments often running into billions of dollars. For example, the Lake Albert Development Oil Project, comprising the Kingfisher and Tilenga upstream oil projects, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline and the Lake Albert Infrastructure Project, is likely to generate significant revenue and create local jobs. However, the best prices for oil and gas may fluctuate based on global market conditions, and companies often use long-term contracts and hedging strategies to manage price risks (CNOOC, 2024; TotalEnergies, 2024).

Participatory communication is about how the Kingfisher upstream oil project will be implemented in a way that is transparent, inclusive and in collaboration with all stakeholders. The involvement of the local communities through regular meetings, workshops and public consultations allows residents to raise their concerns, provide feedback, and participate actively in decision-making processes (Dikeocha, 2024). Involvement of various stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations in planning and implementation would ensure that it is holistic, taking into consideration a wide array of interests and needs. Communication channels should be open and transparent to report on the state of affairs, risks and mitigation measures taken, which creates trust and cuts down on misinformation (Gregory & Yudarwati, 2024).

Apart from the above, capacity-building programmes and training sessions need to be arranged to make the local communities competent enough to participate in the project effectively. Clear and accessible mechanisms for receiving and addressing feedback, such as hotlines, suggestion boxes and online platforms, should be made available through which stakeholders may report issues, seek clarifications, and provide suggestions. The establishment of committees or working groups comprising representatives from the community, the government and project developers will also

facilitate problem-solving in a collaborative manner by instilling ownership and shared responsibility. With the application of these participatory communication approaches, Kingfisher's oil project will hear the voices of all the stakeholders in support of more viable alternatives that lead towards sustainability and equity (Dikeocha, 2024; Gregory & Yudarwati, 2024).

2.4 Theoretical Foundation

2.4.1 The Social Cognitive theory

To further analyse the study objectives well, the study adopted the Social Cognitive theory (SCT), which is used in psychology, education and communication. The SCT, initially known as the Social Learning theory, proposes that an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly influenced by observing others in the context of social interactions, experiences and external media influences (de Mooij, 2013).

Social cognitive theory provides an agentic conceptual framework for investigating the determinants and psychosocial mechanisms by which symbolic communication influences human thought, affect and action. Communication systems follow two paths: the direct pathway promotes changes by informing, enabling, motivating and guiding participants (Bandura, 2009), while in the socially mediated pathway, media influences connect participants to social networks and community settings that offer natural incentives and ongoing personalised guidance to facilitate desired changes. Social cognitive theory examines the diffusion of new behavioural styles through the lens of psychosocial factors that influence their acquisition and adoption, as well as the social networks that promote and sustain them. While structural interconnectedness provides potential pathways for diffusion, psychosocial factors play a significant role in determining what behaviours are transmitted along these paths (Onyango & Oloka, 2023).

Proposed by Albert Bandura as the Social Learning theory in 1977 who later renamed it to Social Cognitive theory in 1986, it suggests that learning occurs within a social context, where individuals actively interact with their environment and shape their behaviour. SCT influences participatory communication in projects through observational learning, self-efficacy, modeling behaviour, reciprocal determinations, social comparisons, feedback and reinforcement, and understanding group dynamics (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). Observational learning enhances participants' skills

and confidence, self-efficacy fosters active engagement, and positive role models inspire others (Onyango & Oloka, 2023). Reciprocal determinism highlights the dynamic interaction between personal factors and environmental influences, while social comparisons motivate improvement. Feedback and reinforcement also shape behaviour, and understanding group dynamics creates an inclusive environment.

SCT focuses on the roles of observational learning, social influence and behavioural reinforcement in the development of behaviours and attitudes. In the case of participatory communication in public-private partnership projects, SCT can be used to facilitate transparency through a number of means (Onyango & Oloka, 2023).

First, through active engagement of community members and stakeholders in the communication process, PPP projects can make use of observational learning. Transparency will, in effect, be infectious when stakeholders witness it through open meetings, access to project updates, and inclusive decision-making. They, too, will become adopters. Social influence can play an enormous role in this regard, as community leaders and influential voices for transparency may inspire others to demand and practice the same standards. Also, reinforcing positive behaviours, such as listening to and acting upon community concerns in a timely manner, helps to build trust and fosters further engagement. Participatory communication should, therefore, effectively enhance the transparency of the PPP projects by creating an environment where transparency is visibly practised and rewarded (Onyango & Oloka, 2023).

Social cognitive theory (SCT) supports community development practice by explaining human behaviour as a continuous interaction of cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences (Odoom & Annor-Frempong, 2023). Effective community development occurs when people recognise the value of previous interventions and commit to future initiatives. Community development professionals create learning environments to help members connect with one another and with societal structures. Empowerment is crucial for achieving mutual goals, and since the 1960s, community development has been used to solve societal problems, particularly in developing nations such as Malawi, Kenya and Ghana (Odoom, 2021).

Development communication, international public relations, and advertising are the most cross-culturally involved forms of behaviour change communication. The history of development communication reveals strategies that have been information-based and top-down, primarily through traditional mass media (Balonas, 2021). Recently, approaches have shifted from a dependency model to a participatory model. The concepts of relationship and publics are central to public relations theory and practice, and their practical applications vary with individualism and power distance. A one-size-fits-all approach will be ineffective.

The social cognitive theory is probably one of the most frequently cited theories in mass communication research (Kasongo & Abongdia, 2021). The theory explains how humans can learn through observation and express their attitudes explicitly. It provides a framework for analysing the determinants and psychological mechanisms by which symbolic communication influences human behaviour, thought and action (Liao, 2023). For instance, the effects of social media on the attitudes and behavioural patterns of people constitute the core relevant areas in which the social cognitive theory has been applied. This explains its relevance to the observational understanding of participatory communication and its corresponding consequences for fostering transparency in Uganda's oil and gas sector (Scott, 2021). SCT can also be used to promote safe practices among oil and gas industry partners. Behaviour Change Communication can, for example, be used to encourage the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and adherence to safety protocols in order to reduce the risk of accidents and injuries (Servaes, 2021)

Bandura (2009) believes that the social cognitive theory provides a causal model for explaining human behaviours under the reciprocal interactions among personal behavioural and environmental factors (Odoom et al., 2021). From this perspective, the mechanics of the theory proceed along a broad spectrum of interconnected elements that are deeply rooted in the convergence of human behavioural and environmental dynamics. Fundamentally, therefore, human behavioural dynamics originate from environmental dynamics, implying that human perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and reactions are conditioned by the environment and its dynamics (Orngu, 2018). The new trends in information and communication technology, epitomised by social media, vividly illustrate the dynamic character of the larger global environment and its concomitant implications for human behavioural patterns across the global system.

In the current study, a community-based participatory approach is used to form collaborative and non-hierarchical partnerships with community members in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the societal underpinnings of oil projects and design and implement a robust intervention to prevent in oil and gas projects and at Kingfisher Development Project in Western Uganda. The social cognitive theory was used to influence gender and VAW knowledge, attitudes and social norms (Dela Cruz et al., 2023).

2.4.2 The Stakeholder theory

In addition, the stakeholder theory, first put forth by Edwards Freeman in 1984 to explain how an effective corporation never loses sight of everyone involved in its success, was used in this study (Freeman, 1984).

The stakeholder theory states that in order to be successful, an organisation needs to take into account the interests of a wider group of stakeholders than just the interests of the shareholders (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders can be internal - those that are entrusted to use resources of the project to achieve the project's objectives, like the public and private sectors - or external - those that are affected or perceived to be affected by the project, such as the local communities (Newcombe, 2003). The principles of the stakeholder theory have been widely used to study and manage stakeholder relationships in oil and gas projects (Atkin & Skitmore, 2008) as well as enhance the success of projects. Amadi et al. (2018) posit that the application of stakeholder principles in oil and gas projects has become important due to the complexities of modern projects, which create multiple stakeholders. These multiple stakeholders have different interests and concerns, which could be conflicting, and mismanaging them can have devastating consequences on projects, such as litigations and time overrun. The importance of stakeholders as key determinants to the success of projects has been recognised, and necessitated the structured management of stakeholders. The essence, according to Newcombe (2003), is to aid project practitioners in identifying and understanding project stakeholders, the management of such stakeholders, and how to understand and deal with the likely parochial interests of each stakeholder.

This stakeholder theory has important implications for other theories. According to Dmytriiev et al. (2021), the founders of various strategic management theories modified them with the premises

of the stakeholder theory. For example, the stakeholder approach is incorporated into the resource-based theory (Barney, 2018). The theory of competitive strategy and advantage (Porter et al., 2012) has been revisited to explain the concept of creating shared value for the benefit of stakeholders associated with the firm. Agency theory has been supplemented by a stakeholder perspective constrained by norms of reciprocity and fairness (Bosse & Phillips, 2016).

The stakeholder theory has been used in similar studies by Lutfi and Kurniawati (2023) and Byaruhanga and Langer (2020) to explain stakeholder participation in the oil and gas industry. Lutfi and Kurniawati (2023) used stakeholder theory to understand the implementation of the partnership model of the upstream oil and gas industry, while Byaruhanga and Langer (2020) used it to evaluate the implementation of local content policies in Africa, specifically referencing Uganda's oil and gas local content policy.

Applying stakeholder theory and participatory communication to oil and gas projects involves several tools, including stakeholder mapping, stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder mapping helps prioritise communication and engagement strategies for various stakeholder groups, tailoring messages and channels to their needs and preferences (Coleman et al., 2019). Stakeholder analysis assesses stakeholders' expectations, perceptions, attitudes and concerns about the project, identifying opportunities and risks, and designing appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. Stakeholder engagement involves establishing and maintaining constructive and transparent relationships with stakeholders throughout the project cycle, fostering a sense of ownership and partnership among stakeholders (Röckmann et al., 2017).

Stakeholder theory is a view of business that stresses the interconnected relationships between a company and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities and others who have a stake in the organisation (Mojtahedi & Oo, 2012). It argues that a company should create value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders, and that ethics and social responsibility are essential for business success. Stakeholder theory is used to understand the study in several ways (Moodley, 2023). Firstly, it helps map out the stakeholder landscape and the dynamics of the oil and gas sector in Uganda, which is complex and diverse, involving multiple actors at different levels, such as the government, oil companies, local communities, civil society, media, academia, donors, and

regional and international partners. Secondly, it helps assess the degree of transparency and accountability in the sector by examining the extent to which stakeholders have access to relevant and timely information, participate in decision-making processes, and hold each other accountable for their actions and impacts (Ndlela, 2019). Thirdly, it helps identify the best practices and strategies for participatory communication by exploring how stakeholders can communicate and collaborate effectively, build trust and mutual understanding, resolve conflicts and grievances, and enhance social and environmental sustainability (Børve & Thøring, 2022). By incorporating participatory communication practices and stakeholder theory, the transparency and success of PPP projects can be significantly enhanced.

Stakeholder theory can also provide some insights and recommendations for improving the transparency and accountability in the oil and gas sector in Uganda, based on the findings and lessons learned from the studies by Katamba et al. (2023), and Byaruhanga (2021). Some of these benefits may include: developing and implementing a comprehensive and inclusive stakeholder engagement plan that covers all stages of the project cycle, from exploration to production to decommissioning, and that addresses the needs and concerns of the stakeholders; and establishing and strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks and mechanisms for transparency and accountability, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), the National Oil and Gas Policy, and the Public Finance Management Act (Sustain Uganda, 2019).

Other benefits would be enhancing the capacity and empowerment of the stakeholders, especially the local communities, to access and use information, to voice their opinions and demands, to participate in dialogue and consultation, and to monitor and evaluate the project performance and outcomes; promoting a culture of openness, honesty and respect among the stakeholders; and fostering a shared vision and commitment for the sustainable development of the oil and gas sector and the country as a whole.

While the stakeholder theory and the social cognitive theory (SCT) share a strong emphasis on inclusiveness and responsibility, they both have weaknesses. The stakeholder theory is hindered by challenges of balancing the clashing interests of different stakeholders as well as uncertainty in identifying and prioritising critical stakeholders (Nederhand & Klijn, 2016). SCT, however, tends

to be centered on utopian social responsibility objectives that might not be feasible in competitive contexts, and it tends to lack specific strategies for implementation. Even with these weaknesses, SCT balances stakeholder theory by emphasizing the significance of social responsibility, and creating trust and legitimacy among stakeholders. Both theories encourage forward-looking stakeholder engagement through participatory decision-making and ethical behaviour to create a unifying framework for sustainable business practice (Abuzeinab & Arif, 2014). Both support each other in demanding a balance between profitability and social equity, and ensuring transparency and mutual benefit.

Therefore, Social Cognitive Theory supplies the behavioral mechanism that operationalizes Stakeholder Theory. It transforms stakeholder management from a fixed identification of actors into an interactive process of influence, learning, and adaptation. By applying SCT, it becomes possible to anticipate how stakeholders interpret organizational actions and to explain why particular engagement strategies are effective or ineffective, thus strengthening the practical and analytical value of Stakeholder Theory.

2.5 Empirical Review

2.5.1 Communication structures that enhance participatory communication

The empirical literature highlights communicative structures that allow for participatory communication. There are many valuable contributions drawing on a diverse range of scholars. Among others, Chitnis (2021) uses structuration theory to explore how participatory communication may be inculcated into existing institutional structures. Structuration theory provides a focus on knowledgeable agents who act within, and upon, the rules and resources of the structure being enabling and constraining at the same time. By acknowledging this duality, participatory communication can use existing structures to promote change toward more inclusive and transparent practices. Chitnis (2021) uses Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action to make a similar argument. He distinguishes between communicative and strategic actions, which is to say that dialogue and mutual understanding are at the heart of participatory communication. This approach allows stakeholders to have a real dialogue that builds understanding and trust, both of which are vital in creating transparency (Jacobson, 2023).

Building on these foundational theories, Tacchi et al. (2019) present a participatory framework for researching and evaluating communication for development. The framework is hinged on engagement, relationships, empowerment and dialogue as the pivotal points that drive positive social change. Tacchi et al. argue that participatory communication should not just deliver information but should also engage the communities in the communication process. Therefore, it would not be top-down; rather, it would be participatory and represent the voices and concerns of all stakeholders in an equal and fair manner. This participatory approach enhances transparency because the communication process becomes a subject of public scrutiny and deliberation (Tacchi et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Anyaegbunam (2014) focuses on participatory rural communication appraisal (PRCA), a methodology that actively involves communities in identifying their communication needs and developing strategies to address them effectively. This is because PRCA involves communities in formulating communication strategies, hence making such strategies relevant, effective and transparent since they emanate from the experiences and observations of the members of the community themselves.

Participatory communication also uses other tools such as stakeholder mapping and analysis in promoting transparency. Mapping of stakeholders is the identification and classification based on the various interests, influences and importance. This helps in prioritizing communications and engagements to ensure proper execution, allowing for the hearing of all relevant voices and their perspectives. On the other hand, stakeholder analysis involves assessment of stakeholder expectations and perception attitudes concerning a particular project.

The tool identifies opportunities and risks and elaborates on necessary mitigation/enhancement measures. When the stakeholders see that their concerns are taken into consideration, an open atmosphere is created among them where information is freely and transparently shared, and decisions are collectively made. In this regard, it further presents that stakeholder engagement creates transparency (World Bank, 2007). Maunda and Moronge (2016) pointed out that throughout the project cycle, any project should seek to establish and maintain constructive, transparent relationships regarding the stakeholder community. This engagement in decision-

making processes and avenues for feedback are important components of this equation. In that way, it enhances the credibility, accountability and sustainability of projects. Likewise, stakeholders' trust in the projects and their respective leaders will go up because they feel confident that their input has been considered or their concerns noted. This trust is foundational for transparent communication, as it creates an environment where information flows freely and is scrutinized collectively (Madsen, 2022).

In summary, empirical literature demonstrates that participatory communication, supported by robust communication structures and tools, significantly enhances transparency in projects. The combined insights of scholars such as Chitnis (2021) and Sustain Uganda (2019) highlight the importance of inclusive, dialogue-based and community-driven approaches to communication. These approaches ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, consideration of their concerns, and the transparency of the whole communication process. Projects with such principles would create an atmosphere of openness that will add to better communication and increase trust and, consequently, the legitimacy of the success of this or that initiative.

2.5.2 Participatory communication as a tool for enhancing transparency in the oil and gas sector

Participatory communication plays a crucial role in promoting transparency within the oil and gas sector, facilitating active engagement between stakeholders and ensuring that the decision-making processes reflect the interests and concerns of all involved parties.

Roberto (2018) asserts that there is a huge communication gap between the vast majority of people who live in the informal economy, on the edge of survival, or in peasant farming and the modernised elite sector. Despite the abundance of newspapers, magazines and improved broadcasting in the modern sector, not much of this wealth of information reaches the grassroots. Although there are offices for agricultural extension services and health education services in district and regional towns, not much of this information is actually incorporated into the lives of the people living there (Dikeocha, 2024). The primary forms of communication and sources of local, indigenous knowledge include: oral traditions, such as storytelling, songs and proverbs; community gatherings, including discussions and ceremonies; and visual symbols, including art

and cultural artifacts. These methods preserve and pass down valuable knowledge across generations (Adetola et al., 2024). How will the technical sector's information enter the general public's knowledge base?

Kigbu, et al. (2020) noted that it is in the political domain that this gulf is most apparent. More often than not, the grassroots do not know what their political representatives are doing and seldom hold them accountable. On their part, the political leaders normally look at being elected as an opportunity to serve their self-interest or that of their constituents by hook or crook. Few consider their election as a mandate to represent their constituents. How can this gap be bridged so that Africans at the grassroots level actually become "citizens" who have an impact on national decisions? Easy answers do not exist (Kigbu, et al., 2020).

The top-down control system from the colonial era still serves as the root of communication (Abdulkarim et al., 2020). It is absolutely clear that the colonial masters did not encourage undue inter-group communication or ask the public to suggest to them what should be done (Wang et al., 2024). The system in the colonial era of district and regional commissioners remains the top mechanism to effect "non-communication" and silence at the grassroots. The first step in any communication process must be an information search by the locals themselves. Outside advisors need to be attentive to the initiatives of the locals themselves, who know their needs. A second dimension of the communication model is that the most important flow of information is the horizontal exchange of ideas among locals themselves (Trindade et al., 2023). Horizontal communication, which occurs between individuals or groups at the same level within an organisation, promotes collaboration and guarantees that information is freely shared among colleagues, resulting in a more transparent and informed work environment (Safapour et al., 2021).

Typically, there are readily available networks for informal information sharing and community organisations. Third, there are the community-dwelling professionals with training and leadership (Agbejule et al., 2021). A fourth aspect of the communication process involves using radio and other media much more actively, not as a way to supplement lectures but as a way for local groups to communicate with one another. The immediate presence of radio and its low cost of transmission and reception are two of its benefits. Producing radio broadcasts is highly flexible, and with the

advent of new mobile technologies, local groups can now broadcast directly. According to the participatory communication model, the community should be the starting point.

The challenges of living situations are discussed, and exchanges with other communities are introduced at the community level. There is incredible potential within marginalised communities that is not being utilised to use communication for the common good (Servaes, 2023). Development efforts are more sustainable and effective when those most impacted by social injustice have the self-assurance and skills to access, manage and control the processes, instruments and content of communication (Servaes, 2023)). Additionally, it shows how urgent it is to address the consequences of underdevelopment and engage the public in meaningful dialogue with policymakers and message providers. Self-management is the most sophisticated kind of participation. MacKinnon et al. (2021) argue that this principle implies the right to participate in the creation and planning of media content. The threat posed by preexisting hierarchies, they continue, is one of the key factors influencing the choice to implement the participation strategy. However, participation must be paramount in that locals' opinions must be taken into account before funds are distributed and allocated for development projects, and their recommendations for policy changes must be implemented (Cheruiyot, 2022).

2.5.3 Communication strategy and message development in oil and gas projects

The systems and processes that enable the exchange of information and data among the various stakeholders involved in the exploration, development, production and distribution of oil and gas resources are referred to as communication channels in oil and gas projects (Hanga & Kovalchuk, 2019). Communication channels can vary depending on the project's type, size, location and complexity, but they usually include the following elements:

According to Nassanga (2019), civil society organizations play an important role in advocating for the development of participatory hybrid community media. She argues that the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) has had a significant impact on the newsroom cultures of community radio journalists in Africa, particularly in Mozambique, Uganda and Mali. She further found that the integration of ICTs had improved information collection, processing, distribution and storage, and community

engagement, particularly via mobile phones and the internet. On the other hand, she noted that rural community radios in remote areas faced challenges due to lack of electricity, high service provider fees and high costs for ICT equipment, maintenance and operations. Chen et al. (2021) advocate for increased support for infrastructure development so that rural community radio stations can benefit from ICT integration. Therefore, to meet the Kingfisher Development Project's changing needs and demands, the communication network should be aligned with community radio journalism, which will make it dependable, resilient, secure, and scalable (Chen et al., 2021).

Participatory decision-making plays a significant role in influencing organisational performance, as Nyindo (2023) found. He concluded that involving employees in decision-making impacts their commitment positively, which, in turn, enhances overall organisational performance. Participatory decision-making, is expected to, among others, lead to greater innovation, lower employee absenteeism and lower turnover. Thus, participatory communication in oil and gas projects would improve employee participation, which leads to community participation. According to Nduhura et al. (2022), community participation is vital for human rights protection and development. Their study also revealed that human rights information was scanty at the sub-county levels. It was further found that there is a positive relationship between human rights, community participation and development and, therefore, recommended that officials and the community should consider community participation to protect human rights and development.

The communication plan should align with the project management plan and the stakeholder management plan, and address the communication needs and expectations of all the internal and external stakeholders (Sanyaolu et al., 2023). The communication plan should also include a risk management strategy to identify and mitigate potential communication issues and challenges (Trindade et al, 2023). A communication team should consist of individuals responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring and controlling communication activities and processes for the project. This team would ensure that information flows effectively among stakeholders, aligns with project goals, and addresses any challenges that arise. Its role should include developing communication strategies, managing resources, tracking progress and fostering collaboration to achieve the desired outcomes (Ribeiro et al., 2021). The communication team should have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage the communication network, the communication plan and the communication tools and systems. The communication team should

also coordinate and collaborate with other project teams and stakeholders to ensure effective and efficient communication throughout the project lifecycle (Chen et al., 2021).

According to Xie et al. (2021), a communication system refers to the network of tools and applications that facilitate the creation, storage, retrieval, processing, analysis, dissemination and utilization of information and data throughout the duration of the project. This can include email, instant messaging, video conferencing, web portals, databases, dashboards, reports, etc. The communication system should be user-friendly, accessible, compatible and secure, and should support the communication network and the communication plan. The communication system should also provide feedback and evaluation mechanisms to measure and improve the communication performance and outcomes (Chen et al., 2021).

Communication channels are essential for ensuring the success and sustainability of oil and gas projects, as they facilitate the coordination, collaboration and integration of the various project activities and processes, and enhance the quality, timeliness and accuracy of the information and data that support the decision-making and problem-solving processes. Communication channels also help to build trust, rapport and engagement among the project stakeholders, and to manage the expectations, interests and concerns of the project beneficiaries and affected parties (Zhao, et al., 2021).

2.6 Research Gap

Based on the reviewed literature, there is a research gap in participatory communication in the Kingfisher Development Project in Uganda. Most of the available sources are from government agencies, such as the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), or project operators, such as CNOOC Uganda Limited and TotalEnergies EP Uganda. These sources mainly focus on the technical, economic and legal aspects of the project, such as the drilling activities, the pipeline construction, the production sharing agreements, and the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) reports.

There is a scarcity of independent scholarly and critical analysis of participatory communication on the Kingfisher project in Uganda from the perspectives of affected communities, civil society

organizations, the media, academia and other stakeholders. Therefore, this study sought to bridge the gap by investigating existing communication structures, the process of message development and existing channels of communication to provide literature on how participatory communication can foster transparency in Uganda's oil and gas sector using a case study of the Kingfisher Development Project.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I present the methodology I used to explore how participatory communication can foster transparency and acceptance of the Kingfisher Development Project. In this chapter, I articulate the research design, population, sample size, sampling methods, data sources, methods of data collection, data collection tools, procedure for data collection, quality control (validity and reliability), data analysis, and the ethical considerations involved.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory research design that involves exploring the research questions, and it is usually conducted to study a problem that has not been clearly defined (Kothari, 2014). This research design helps to understand the nature of the problem and helps the researcher and the readers of the report to have a more comprehensive and better understanding of the problem. The research seeks to explain the current communication strategies, channels and message development process of the structures in Kingfisher Development Project (Lowhorn, 2007). Based on the fact that there have been limited numbers of previous in-depth studies and readily available data on how participatory communication can foster transparency and acceptance of the Kingfisher Development Project, and that many reports allude to the poor reception or lack of community ownership of the project, the researcher adopted an exploratory research design to investigate how participatory communication can foster transparency and acceptance of the Kingfisher Development Project

3.3 Research Approach

The researcher adopted the qualitative approach to collect data. The qualitative research approach applies illumination (Hoepfl, 2019), understanding, interviewee experience and focus group discussions in similar situations to obtain information to explore how participatory communication can foster transparency and acceptance of the Kingfisher Development Project (Golafshani, 2013). This approach was used to collect information that is non-measurable or non-quantifiable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). This approach allowed the selected respondents to express themselves on how they perceived and felt about different issues that were presented to them, based on their expertise, experience and understanding of the research phenomenon. This facilitated the collection of detailed data since the approach allowed the researcher to probe more information regarding the study objectives.

3.4 Study Population

According to Mocanaşu (2020), the adequacy of a study population is a key marker for the overall outcome of the research quality while carrying out qualitative research. Creswell (2014) explains a population as a complete set of cases or individuals with common experiences, expertise and understanding of the research phenomenon. The study population consisted of community members, district leaders, CNOOC Uganda leaders and staff, civil society organisations, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, and UNOC members. The study involved 75 respondents in total as the population, which was considered based on a pilot study involving respondents who have experienced and gained an understanding of the phenomenon and can give information relating to participatory communication. This population consisted of 22 staff (district, CNOOC, PAU, UNOC, CSOs) and 53 community members. Targeting district and CNOOC staff helped the researcher to tap insights in their perspectives on the current communication channels and message development they use to reach out to the community. The community was also contacted to help assess the current communication systems used, and to suggest improvements.

3.5 Sampling Methods and Procedure

According to Bell and Reed (2022), a sampling method refers to a solicited plan for obtaining a total sample from a study population. Since the study required undertaking an extensive investigation into the specific phenomenon rather than making statistical inferences, only members

who were experienced and possessed a great wealth of knowledge and awareness concerning the implementation of participatory communication, and those who were affected by the poor participatory process (community) were contacted. By using the purposive sampling technique, the researcher explored current communication strategies, channels and the current message development processes of the structures in the Kingfisher Development Project as recommended by Babbie (2020). This guided the researcher in establishing the solutions to the challenges of participatory communication in the Kingfisher Development Project.

3.6 Sample Size

According to Fellows and Liu (2021), a sample means a subsection of a certain population. Daniela (2020) argues that there are no general numerical directions in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006), empirical rules, or methods guiding the researcher in obtaining a sample size (Kindsiko & Poltimäe, 2019; Malterud et al., 2015). Majority of researchers in qualitative research use the concept of saturation to understand whether the sample size is appropriate (Malterud *et al.*, 2015; Sandelowski, 1995). Confirmation of the actual number of respondents was reached through saturation while conducting the interviews on the study phenomenon. Saturation is achieved when any further data collection would not result in the identification of a new theoretical category that would be useful for understanding and explaining the analyzed occurrence (Mocănașu, 2020). Relatedly, Mbabazi (2011) states that a good sample ought to represent elements in the population. According to Roscoe (1975), sample sizes of less than 10 participants are not recommended. It has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke & Braun, 2013). However, for most studies to generate a wide range of views and opinions, a sample size of between 20 and 40 participants for qualitative studies has been the most appropriate (Saunders, 2012). This study considered 75 participants as presented in Table 3.1 below, which was established through a pilot investigation conducted with individual respondents with knowledge and experience of the study phenomenon. The actual number of respondents, however, depended on the saturation of the field-collected data.

Table 1: Composition of the respondents

Category	Sample size	Sampling technique
Community members	53	Purposive sampling

District/ government leaders	2	Purposive Sampling
Civil society organisations	5	Purposive Sampling
CNOOC Uganda	6	Purposive Sampling
MDAs (UNOC, PAU)	9	Purposive Sampling
Total	75	

3.7 Data Sources

Primary data, under the qualitative approach, is the type of data collected by the researcher directly from the respondents as identified by category in Table 3.1 above. The information obtained was neither interpreted nor translated, agreeing with (Amin, 2005), and thus it was first-hand qualitative information, collected directly from the field. The key informant interview and focus group discussion guide were the critical research instruments for primary data collection.

3.8 Data Collection Methods and Data Collection Tools

This study employed qualitative data collection methods specifically selected to align with the research objectives and questions, which sought to examine the nature, effectiveness, challenges, and perceived impact of participatory communication in the Kingfisher Development Project. Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used because they enable participants to articulate experiences, perceptions, and meanings in ways that directly address the study’s inquiry into communication processes, stakeholder engagement practices, transparency, community participation, and trust-building.

3.8.1 Interview method

The research considered the qualitative research approach in which the researcher conducted an inquiry that sought an in-depth understanding and thus adopted the interview method. This method relies on respondents' direct experience and expertise.

To address research objectives focused on assessing institutional approaches to participatory communication, stakeholder engagement strategies, information disclosure practices, and challenges in implementing participatory mechanisms, the study utilized key informant interviews (KIIs). These interviews directly aligned with research questions exploring how

communication is planned, implemented, and perceived by project implementers and local authorities.

The interview method was selected because it facilitates in-depth exploration of respondents' experiences and professional insights relevant to complex organizational processes (Tibaingana et al., 2018). Interviews allow probing, clarification, and flexibility, making them well suited to generating nuanced explanations of participatory communication practices (Babbie, 2020).

Interviews were conducted face-to-face with 22 key informants, including representatives from CNOOC, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), and district leaders. This approach enabled the researcher to collect detailed data on, communication policies and engagement frameworks, mechanisms for community consultation and participation, transparency practices, particularly around compensation, environmental management, and grievance handling, and institutional challenges in sustaining inclusive communication.

These themes were directly drawn from the study objectives and research questions, ensuring that every interview generated targeted evidence relevant to examining how participatory communication is conceptualized and operationalized by project stakeholders. One-on-one interviews were preferred to maintain privacy and confidentiality, given the sensitivity of governance, compensation, and community relations issues.

Face-to-face engagement also enabled observation of non-verbal cues, enhancing interpretation of respondents' sincerity and depth of understanding. However, due to the limitations of individual interviews including potential interviewer bias, time intensity, and a narrower range of perspectives, the researcher triangulated KIIs with focus group discussions to broaden representation and capture collective community voices.

3.8.2 Interview guide

In undertaking this qualitative research, the researcher developed a guide in advance that she referred to during the conduct of the interview. This guide entailed open-ended questions that the interviewer covered during the interview.

The interview guide was designed to operationalize the research objectives and questions into clear, open-ended prompts. In line with Brennen (2021), the guide ensured that interviews

remained focused while allowing flexibility for probing deeper into emerging issues.

Key themes in the guide corresponded directly to the study objectives and research questions which included Modes of stakeholder engagement and decision-making processes, strategies for disseminating project information to communities, Perceived successes and limitations of participatory communication, community feedback mechanisms and responses to grievances, and institutional perspectives on community trust and transparency.

Appointments were scheduled at the convenience of respondents, and interviews lasted approximately 30–50 minutes, balancing depth with participant engagement. This approach ensured consistent data collection aligned to the research questions, while allowing respondents sufficient time to elaborate on experiences related to participatory communication in the Kingfisher project.

3.8.3 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions are scheduled semi-structured interviews facilitated by a knowledgeable facilitator, and are best employed when you need to comprehend a subject more deeply than you can do so through a survey (Fjell, et al., 2021). They are useful for explaining a topic's "why" and "how," or for enhancing the meaning and comprehension of previously learned material. According to Kamogelo and Lucky (2022), focus group discussions (FGDs) are described as meticulously arranged meetings with a number of informants in a group.

With the help of a translator as the researcher is not well versed with a Runyoro dialect, FGDs were employed to address research objectives and questions concerned with community-level experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and collective responses to participatory communication practices. While interviews captured institutional perspectives, FGDs allowed the study to explore the lived realities of community members directly affected by the project, how information is received, understood, contested, and acted upon.

To promote lively debates and access to people's experiences and understanding of a certain topic, the group is frequently homogeneous. Focus group discussions (FGDs) provide a platform for exploring diverse perspectives, enhancing data richness (Banke-Thomas et al., 2015; Rasheli, 2016)), and fostering interactive dialogue that uncovers deeper insights.

The researcher engaged 53 local community members, organized into six focus groups, each consisting of eight to 10 participants. These discussions were strategically structured to respond to research questions examining community awareness of project activities and rights, the perceived accessibility and adequacy of information-sharing channels, experiences with consultation and participation opportunities, attitudes toward transparency in compensation and environmental safeguards, and issues of trust, misinformation, and rumor circulation within communities. According to Steenblock and Fahmy (2008), focus group discussions are generally perceived as less threatening and more conducive to informal exchanges, thereby enabling participants to share their perspectives more openly. This methodological approach enabled the researcher to gather richer insights from respondents while ensuring that group dynamics fostered candid dialogue and deeper exploration of the topic.

Given our patriarchal society, the researcher formed separate groups of women and men to enable the women to freely contribute to the questions (Scheelbeek et al., 2020). Research assistants were trained to carry out these focus group discussions. However, FGDs may have limitations, such as groupthink and dominant voices overpowering others, which can skew the findings. To mitigate this, document review was incorporated to ensure accuracy and provide a broader, objective perspective (Cornesse et al., 2020).

3.8.4 Focus group discussion guide

A focus group discussion guide is a written list of topics or questions that can be used to help facilitate a focus group discussion with a specific demographic of participants. The guide's goal is to discover participants' perceptions, knowledge, behaviour and needs regarding a specific topic, such as product, service, health issue or social problem. To start and drive the conversation, the guide may include various types of questions, such as engagement questions, exploration questions and closed-end questions. The guide is essential for holding effective and relevant focus group discussions that can be used to inform research or programmes design (Bin Sheeha et al., 2020).

The study focus group discussion guide was composed of open-end questions to explore communication dynamics and group interactions in the communities.

The FGD guide translated the study's research objectives and questions into topic-based, open-ended prompts designed to stimulate group dialogue around shared experiences of participatory communication.

The guide was organized around thematic areas directly linked to research questions, including channels of communication between the project and communities, opportunities for community participation in decision-making, the quality and timeliness of information disclosure, perceptions of environmental risk communication and compensation transparency, and community trust in project implementers and government agencies.

3.9 Procedure for Data Collection

In every study, there is a procedure followed for data collection. For this study, the researcher followed a process of gathering and obtaining information on the researched phenomenon, in an established chronological fashion that enabled the respondents to objectively answer the stated research questions.

With the approved proposal and the data collection tools, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Makerere University College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) that was presented to different relevant authorities at Kingfisher Development Project and individuals who were respondents, among others. With this introduction letter, the researcher sought permission to collect data from the sample population. After permission was granted, the researcher proceeded to seek appointments in advance from the respondents accordingly and conduct the interviews. This was important as it allowed for adequacy of interview time with the respondents and facilitated appropriate planning and scheduling of the interviews. The researcher scheduled formal appointments with key informants on appropriate dates in agreement with Naldini et al. (2023).

3.10 Data Analysis

After obtaining the data, the researcher attempted to draw qualitative insights from it. The researcher analyzed all statements, opinions, narrations and descriptions provided by key informants (Fellows & Liu, 2021). The qualitative research software ATLAS.ti was adopted for editing, coding, theming and analyzing the field notes, creating network diagrams, and generating

data visualizations. Following data collection, the researcher edited, condensed and cleaned up all field notes taken during interviews and group discussions with key informants so as to code and generate meaningful themes and patterns for qualitative analysis. The software was utilized to analyze the key themes that emerged from participants' responses.

The researcher ensured the identification, analysis and interpretation of patterns regarding the literal meanings from the qualitative data (Bell & Reed, 2022). All data sources from interviews, focus group discussions and documentary reviews were triangulated during the analysis to increase the validity of the study. Outstanding and relevant quotations, sentences, statements and expressions were selected and used in the analysis to reflect the actual feelings of the participants without altering their intended meaning.

3. 11 Data Quality Control

According to Yin et al. (2014), data quality control in qualitative research is regarded as essential and is achieved by ensuring the validity and reliability of the study instruments. Validity ensures that the research tools accurately measure what they are intended to measure, while reliability ensures that the findings are consistent and can be replicated. These two aspects are crucial for maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research outcomes.

3.11.1 Validity test

The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021) since it is not a single, fixed or universal concept but, rather, a contingent construct inherently rooted in the processes and objectives of research methodologies and projects. According to Amin (2020), validity was taken to mean how well a test measured what it was purposed to measure. The data collection tool was submitted to the supervisor for review and approval. The tool was reviewed by the supervisor, who made comments on the questions in the interview guide. The tool was thereafter subjected to a pilot test and the questions that were found vague were rephrased and some were dropped, thereby removing ambiguity in the data collection tool. The means of ensuring validity in this qualitative study were upheld in the following ways, as described below:

3.11.1.1 Conformability: The researcher ensured conformability through peer review and pre-checking of open-end questions. Analysis results were compared with those from other high-level

studies, and the study adhered to university research ethics guidelines, ensuring academic integrity and rigour.

3.11.1.2 Credibility: The themes, subthemes and codes were generated independently and verified by senior qualitative researchers, particularly those with experience in utilizing ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software, as well as by the supervisor to guard against research bias.

3.11.1.3 Relevance: The researcher ensured that the research findings were reported with sufficient detail so that readers could easily judge whether or not the findings would apply to similar settings.

3.11.2 Reliability test

Reliability considers the ability of separate researchers to come to similar conclusions in a study (Allen et al., 2021). It focused on the consistency in obtaining the same or similar responses from participants. During data collection, the researcher ensured that the data recorded from interviews and focus group discussions accurately reflected the facts, responses, observations and events. This approach involved looking at multiple measurements, observations or samples, and verifying opinions and perspectives with an experienced person to ensure response consistency. Questions were customized so that only appropriate inquiries were posed, and respondents were encouraged to confirm their responses against previous answers where applicable, helping to identify questions likely to elicit inadmissible responses. The tool and data obtained are considered reliable if there is replicability or repeatability of results or observations. Hence a pretest of the tool was conducted on five individuals who were excluded from the main study to establish response consistency. Testing reliability measured the extent to which the tool produced consistent scores when the same group of individuals was repeatedly assessed under the same conditions. Results from the pretest were used to modify questions in the data collection tool, ensuring dependability.

3.11.2.1 Dependability: A pretest on the population was conducted using the research tool, involving five individuals who had professional inclination, experience and a solid understanding of participatory communication, enabling them to provide relevant information on the topic. These individuals did not participate in the main study but were used solely to ascertain the dependability of the tool and ensure accuracy in data collection. Karunarathna et al.(2024) endorsed the concept

of dependability, emphasizing the importance of consistency or reliability in qualitative research instruments, such as interview and focus group discussion guides.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell (2014), ethical considerations in any research are critical. In this qualitative research, ethical considerations encompassed a set of principles that guided the research design and practices throughout the study. These principles included voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, the potential for harm and results communication (Sanjari et al., 2014), which were upheld during the investigation into the effectiveness of tax incentives in Uganda.

During this study, the researcher applied these ethical principles in the following ways:

3.12.1 Confidentiality: For confidentiality reasons, all responses collected from the interviews and focus group discussions were used solely for academic purposes, with access restricted to parties directly involved in the study. Given my position in a civil society organization, there were concerns about

the use of this research in a professional context; however, I assured participants that this study strictly adhered to academic guidelines and would not be utilized for organizational purposes.

3.12.2 Informed consent: To participate in this study, individuals were required to complete a consent form. The researcher thoroughly explained to respondents their roles and rights within the study. Only those who voluntarily provided their consent were included, while individuals who expressed hesitation were excluded from participation.

3.12.3 Privacy/ Anonymity: After data collection, only the supervisor and other academic authorities directly connected to the study had access to the data collected. Furthermore, the names of the respondents, projects and any other information that could lead to tracing and identifying the respondent(s) were not indicated anywhere on the data collection tool, except for those who had agreed to do so.

3.12.4 Voluntary participation: The respondents participating in the study were free from coercion. Participants could withdraw their participation at any time they chose to do so. It,

therefore, remained the right of the respondents to undertake or discontinue participation in the interview exercise without necessarily providing any explanation.

3.12.5 Avoiding harm: Harm or potential for harm could be physical, emotional or psychological, leading to bodily pain, stress, unwarranted anxiety, lowered self-esteem or an invasion of privacy. During the study, the researcher did not, in any way, cause harm, unintended or otherwise, to the respondents.

3.13 Gender Considerations

The research ensured an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach, providing opportunities for both men and women during the interviewing process, as both groups were affected by the project. During the focus group discussions, separate groups for men and women were created to allow women to express themselves freely. Young people above 18 years too were considered during the interviews and focus group discussions, as they were direct beneficiaries through jobs and scholarships from the project.

3.14 Limitations of the Study

Most of the documents reviewed for the study, such as the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, were under the custodianship of government bodies such as the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, which often have a lot of bureaucracy. The researcher experienced some delays in accessing these documents due to the bureaucratic process which disrupted the research process. Additionally, there was a language barrier, as the natives of the area spoke a different language.

To avoid potential distortions in translation due to the researcher's lack of fluency in Runyoro, research assistants fluent in the language were employed, which facilitated accurate translations and helped ensure that responses were faithfully captured. Furthermore, because the study focused solely on the Kingfisher Development Project, the results may not be generalizable to other projects in the oil and gas sector, as each project may have unique communication dynamics.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings. This study is qualitative and was conducted through 22 interviews and 53 informants in focused group discussions respondents. The findings were analyzed and are presented in relation to the study objectives, which were:

- To establish the existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project.
- To analyze the process of message development in Kingfisher Development Project.
- To establish how people utilise the existing communication channels in Kingfisher Development Project.

In the preliminary sections, I explain the response rate, the demographics, the gender dynamics, age of the respondents, education level, and level of experience. This is followed by examining the existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project, the process of message development and the utilisation of the existing communication channels at Kingfisher Development Project.

4.2 Response Rate

There is no agreed number of respondents in qualitative data. As a result, qualitative researchers use saturation to arrive at the sample (Malterud et al., 2015). Therefore, out of the initially planned sample size of 120 respondents identified for the primary data, the researcher managed to interview 75 participants and reached the saturation point where the same responses were emerging from different respondents. This resulted in a 62.5% representation based on the initial projection. Among the interviews, at the 75th respondent, the information from the respondents had converged and reached saturation. This was adequate to generate sufficient information for the study. It thus agreed with Clarke and Braun (2013), and Guest et al., (2006) who recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of twelve (12) to reach data saturation. This guaranteed reliability and validity of the data collected for the study.

4.3 Demographic Information

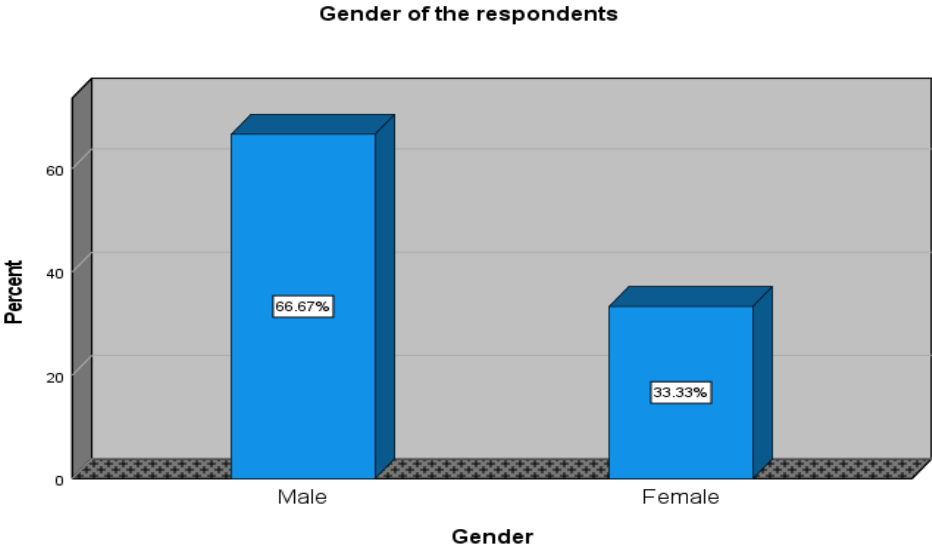
The demographic information covered by the study included gender, age bracket, current organization, job designation, academic qualifications, years of working experience and

department of respondents in the Kingfisher Development Project. Due to the number of participants involved in the study, it was possible to provide a visual representation of the demographic information, as shown in the bar graphs and pie charts in Figures 1 to 4.

4.3.1 Gender

The study examined the gender distribution among the respondents to demonstrate the representation of both males and females. Of the total respondents, 50 (66.67%) were male, and 25 (33.33%) were female. This distribution is reflective of the broader gender ratio within the Kingfisher Development Project, where men dominate most positions, constituting 70% of the workforce, while women make up 30% (Kingfisher PLC report, 2023, p. 25). Consequently, the study ensures that the views of both males and females are adequately represented, as evidenced by their respective proportions in the response sample. This balance helps provide a more comprehensive understanding of the participatory communication processes within the project.

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

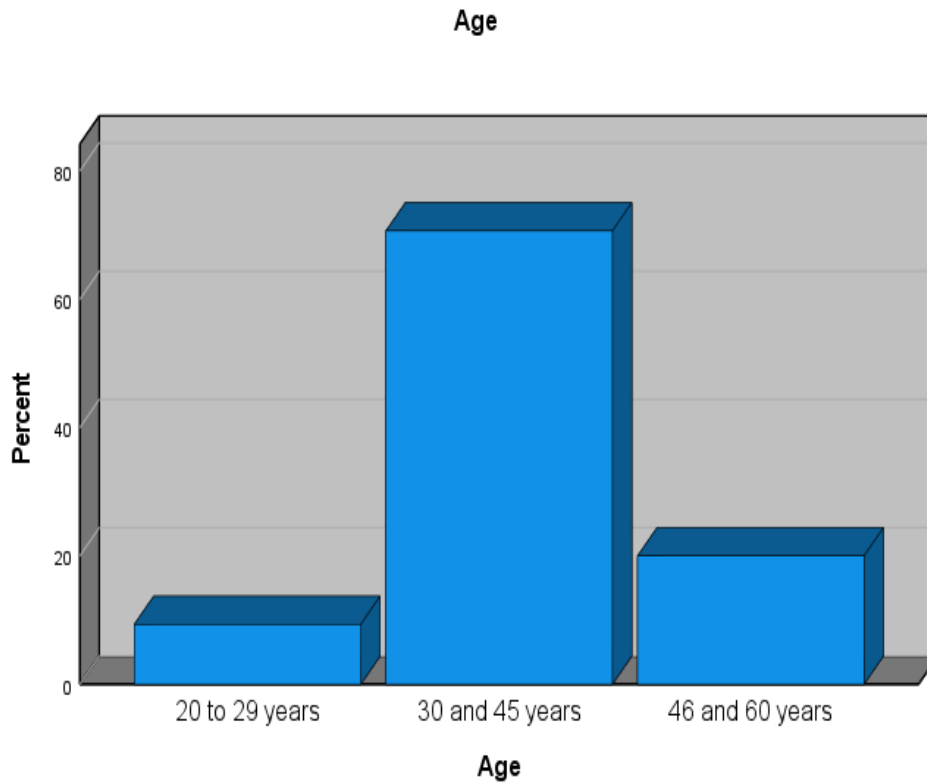


Source: Primary data (2024).

4.3.2 Age bracket of the respondents

In respect to the age of respondents, 53 (70.7%) were aged from 30 to 45 years, while 15 (20%) were aged from 46 to 60 years, and a smaller percentage 7 (9.3%) were a little bit younger, averaging 20 to 29 years. The respondents were adults of sound age and deemed responsible to participate in the study. The implication of having the majority in the youthful age bracket, that is, 30 to 45 years, is that this is the age where they are open to utilizing different communication channels.

Figure 2: *Age bracket of respondents*

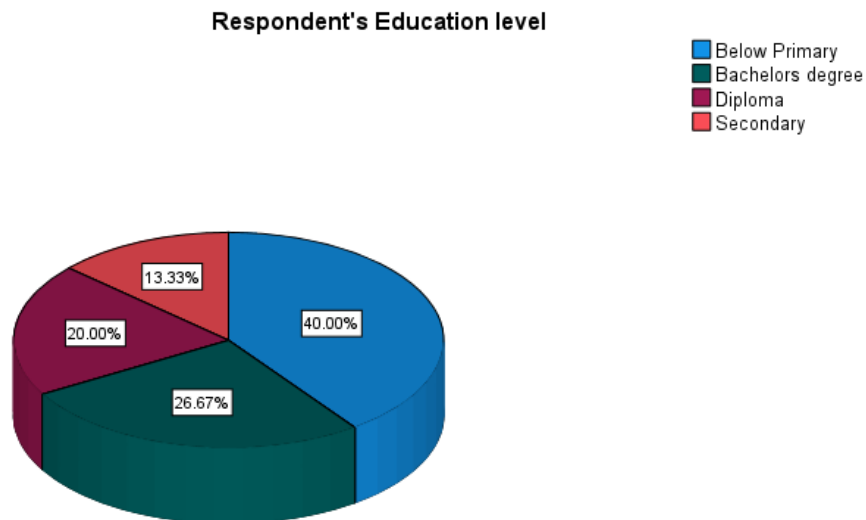


Source: Primary data (2024).

4.3.3 Education level of the respondents

As regards the level of education of the participants, 20 (26.67%) had attained at least a bachelor's degree; 15 (20.0%) were diploma holders; 10 (13.3%) had secondary education; and the majority 30 (40%) had primary education or less. The education levels of participants in the Kingfisher Development Project indicate that communication channels significantly influence behaviour patterns. With 37.0% holding at least a bachelor's degree, these individuals are likely to engage effectively with complex messages, while the 18% with diplomas may focus more on practical applications. This approach ensures effective communication, focusing on immediate and practical application in the workplace. In contrast, the 15% with secondary education might require clearer, more straightforward communication, and the 30% with primary education or less may struggle with sophisticated messaging, highlighting the need for simpler, accessible communication strategies. Tailoring messages to accommodate these diverse educational backgrounds is essential for effective engagement and contribution within the project.

Figure 3: *Level of education of the respondents*

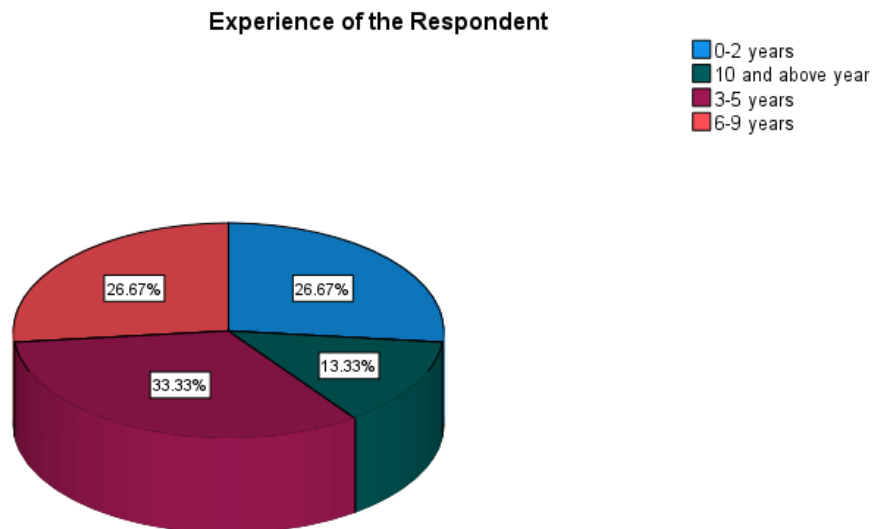


Source: Primary data (2024).

4.3.4 Experience of the respondents

It was further pertinent to find out the experience of the respondents because it affects the communication strategies within the project. In respect to the experience of respondents in the Kingfisher Development Project, 49 (65%) had less than six (6) years of experience in oil and gas projects business, and 26 (35%) had experience of more than six (6) years.

Figure 4: Experience of the respondent

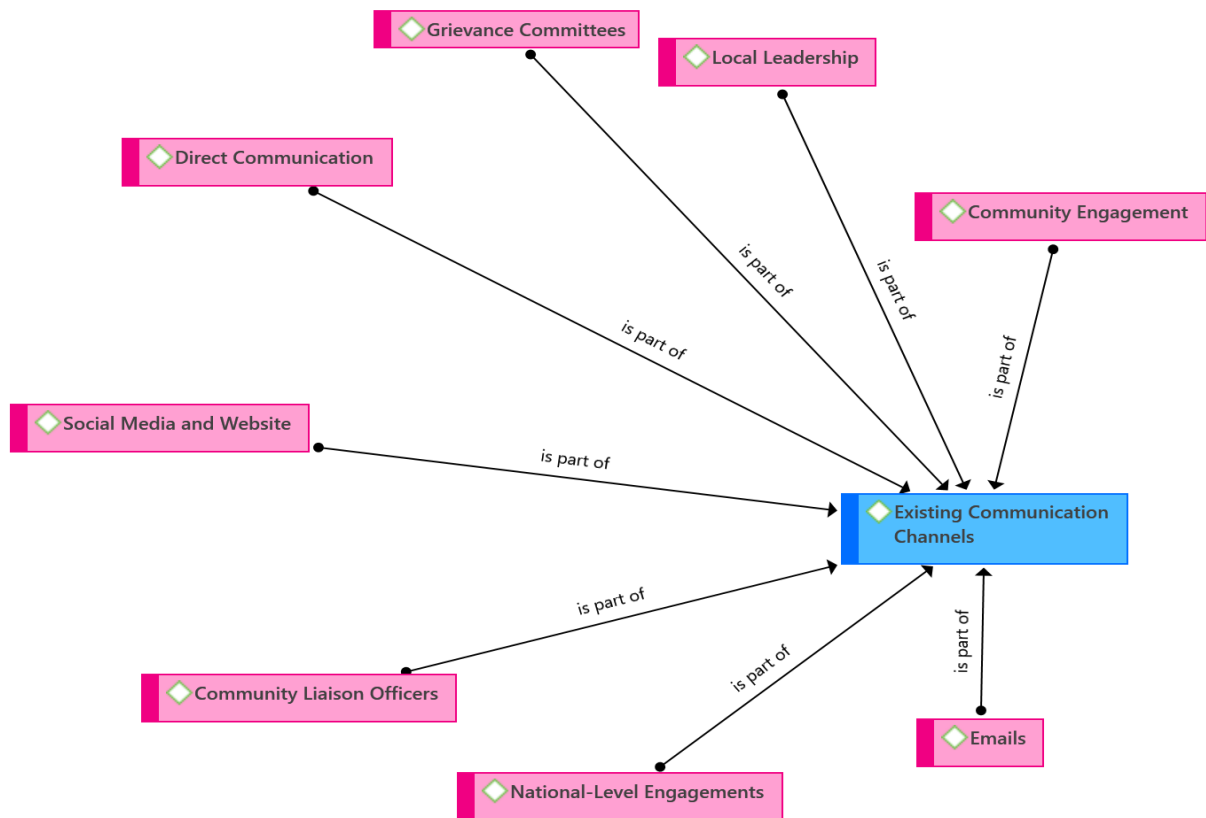


Source: Primary data (2024).

4.4 Findings on existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project

The first objective of this study explored the existing communication structures in the Kingfisher Development Project.

Figure 5: A network from ATLAS.ti showing the key codes for the existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project



Source: Primary data (2024).

4.4.1: Community Liaison Officers

Participants claimed that currently, Community Liaison Officers are used as communication agents on the Kingfisher Development Project. That they play a significant role in responding to community issues, although they are sometimes hard to reach. They serve as intermediaries between the project implementers and the host communities. Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) work as crucial liaisons between project implementers and host communities, facilitating effective

two-way communication. They foster trust by maintaining regular touch, gathering feedback through a variety of channels, and resolving disagreements through mediation. CLOs also keep the community updated on project progress and changes, creating a collaborative atmosphere in which both parties can work toward mutual goals. This function is critical for responding to community concerns and ensuring that the project runs smoothly.

In regard to this, one male participant said:

Yes, for community engagement, we always reach out to the CLO first since he/she is so attached to communities. However, we have to ensure that our requests are heard and attended too through continuous calling via phone.

In another interview, participant No. 22 said:

The Village Liaison Community Officers have been vital in responding to local issues within the Kingfisher Development Project. They serve as key intermediaries, ensuring community concerns are communicated to project management and facilitating important dialogues. Their efforts help foster trust and collaboration between the project and the local population.

4.4.2: Direct communication

Respondents claimed that direct communication is used as an existing communication channel in the Kingfisher Development Project. Direct communication entails expressing messages in a clear, plain manner that avoids ambiguity. This style is frequently praised for its honesty, openness and efficiency. In a development project, adopting direct communication can help ensure that all team members understand their roles, responsibilities and the project's goals, lowering the chances of misinterpretation and improving overall coordination.

In respect to this, one of the participants said:

We empower the communities who directly write officially to the project implementers. The communities are more respected and listened to. For CLOs, they take longer to respond to the invitation, and sometimes we are asked to write to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development. This is a long process, thus ineffective to communication.

4.4.3 Social media and website

Many participants stressed that the Kingfisher Development Project uses social media and its website for communication with other stakeholders. Focus group discussions revealed that these digital channels are seen as essential for disseminating information about project updates, events and stakeholder engagement opportunities. Participants noted that social media allows for real-time communication and broader outreach, enabling the project to connect with a diverse audience, including younger community members who are more active online.

From the focus group discussions, a certain male respondent said:

Social media like X (formerly Twitter) has significantly altered how we connect with the Kingfisher Development Project. It enables us to acquire information swiftly and express our concerns immediately. However, I am concerned that not everyone in our community is online, particularly older people who may lose out on critical updates.

Another respondent said:

While the website is useful for detailed information, it would be great if they also organised community meetings or used local radio to reach those without internet access.

This comment emphasises the significance of a multifaceted communication plan that combines digital and conventional techniques to keep all community members informed and interested.

4.4.4 Grievances committees

Respondents stated that grievance committees had been established inside the Kingfisher Development Project as critical communication structures. Meetings hosted by the Grievance Management Committees allow community members to express their complaints and discuss project-related issues. These discussions are intended to foster dialogue between community people and project personnel, resulting in a better understanding of grievances and potential solutions. However, participants remarked that while the committees exist, their usefulness is limited due to response delays and a failure to follow up on issues raised. This has occasionally led to frustration among community members, pushing them to seek additional avenues, such as media participation, to magnify their complaints.

In regard to this, one of the respondents said:

While grievances committees are a wonderful idea, I've witnessed several instances where our problems linger unresolved for far too long. Sometimes it feels as if we're just talking to a wall. When we do not receive prompt responses, we are forced to turn to the media for attention.

4.4.5 Local leadership

In the interviews, the respondents stressed that the Kingfisher Development Project team uses the local leadership to communicate with the community. This approach involves collaborating with community leaders, such as village chiefs, elders, political leaders and other influential figures, who serve as trusted intermediaries. By leveraging these local leaders, the project team aims to ensure that information flows effectively to community members, as these leaders are often more familiar with the needs and concerns of their charges.

Respondents highlighted that this kind of communication can increase credibility and confidence, as local leaders are viewed as community representatives rather than outsiders. When project updates, events or major announcements are communicated by these leaders, community members are more inclined to listen and participate favorably. Local leadership can also foster conversations, gather input, and relay community issues to the project team, establishing a two-way communication channel.

In line with this, one of the participants said:

Local leaders play a crucial role in bridging the gap between us and the project team. They not only help share important information but also bring our concerns directly to the project managers. When they facilitate discussions, it feels like our voices are being heard.

Another respondent added:

Having a trusted leader speak on our behalf makes it easier for us to express our issues. It creates a more open environment for dialogue, which is essential for building a good relationship with the project. This highlights the importance of local leadership in fostering effective communication and ensuring that community perspectives are represented in project discussions.

4.4.6 Transparency mechanisms

Participants emphasized that transparency is a critical communication structure within the Kingfisher Development Project. They noted that clear disclosure of project information, especially regarding compensation, environmental safeguards, and revenue management, helps reduce community fears and mistrust. Transparency mechanisms such as publishing project updates, holding open community meetings, and sharing accessible reports were highlighted as essential for building confidence among stakeholders. Respondents argued that when information is withheld or delayed, suspicions of corruption and unfair dealings arise, undermining trust in the project. Conversely, proactive disclosure of information fosters accountability and reassures communities that their concerns are being addressed.

In relation to this, one participant remarked:

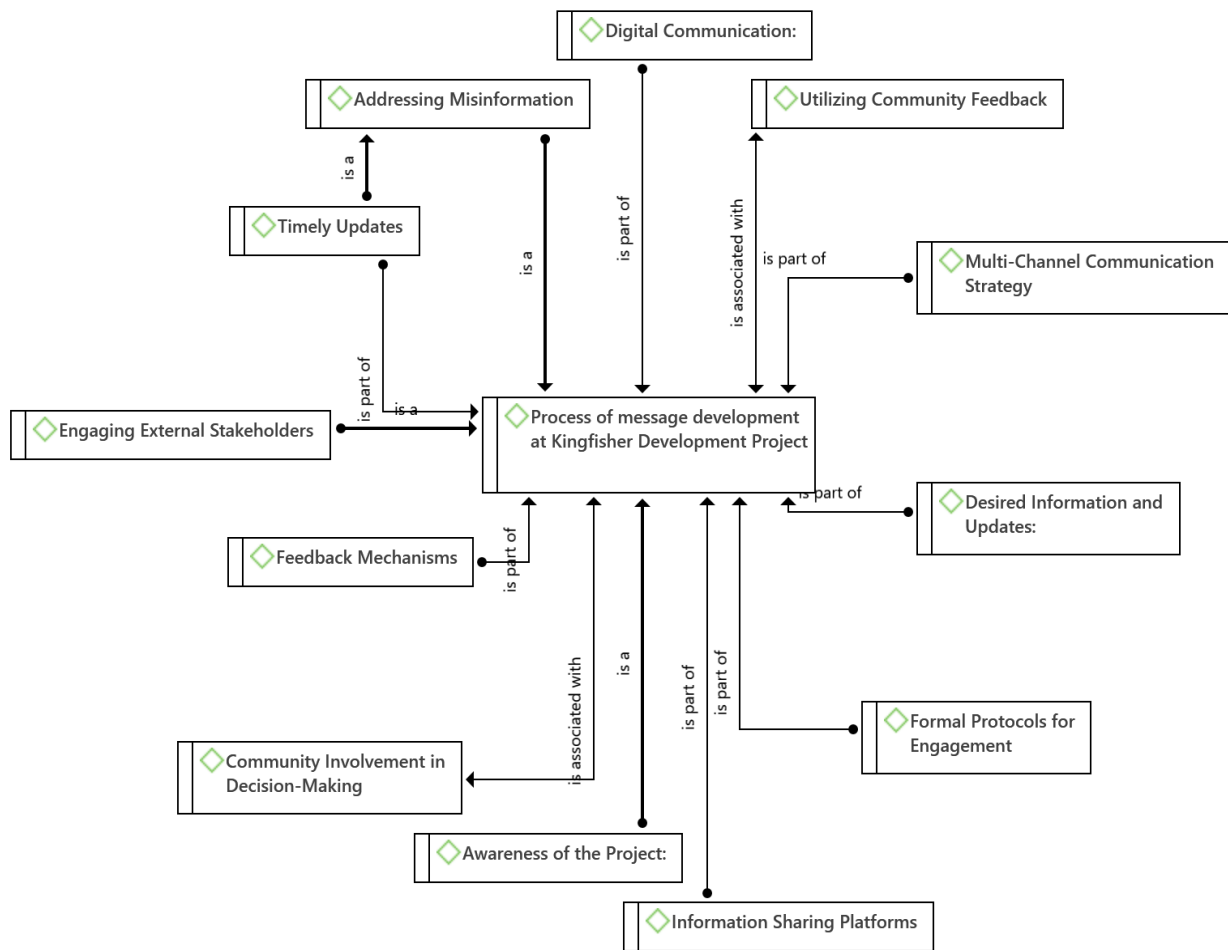
“Transparency is very important. When the project openly shares details about compensation and environmental plans, we feel respected and included. But when information is hidden, rumours spread quickly, and people lose trust.”

— *Community member*

This underscores the importance of embedding transparency into all communication structures, ensuring that communities are not only informed but also empowered to hold project implementers accountable.

4.5 Findings on the Process of Message Development at Kingfisher Development Project

Figure 6: ATLAS.ti network displaying the process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project



Source: Primary data (2024).

4.5.1 Utilising community feedback

The participants asserted that the process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project is based on community feedback. Engaging community members to directly write to

CNOOC has proven effective for quicker responses. This emphasises the importance of establishing feedback loops and allowing communities to raise issues directly. The participants asserted that the process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project is based on community feedback.

In regards to utilizing community feedback, one of the respondents said:

Engagement with external stakeholders often relies on CLOs, who communicate project-related information to the communities.” However, he emphasized the need for community members to be empowered to write directly to project implementers, saying, *“This direct communication is perceived to enhance respect and responsiveness to community concerns.”*

He also noted challenges in engaging civil society organizations (CSOs), which often respond slowly to invitations, saying:

Furthermore, when issues are escalated to government levels, such as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, the process becomes lengthy and ineffective, hampering timely communication.

4.5 2 Addressing misinformation

According to the interviewees, inadequate information leads to negative perceptions of the project. Thus, Kingfisher Development Project has based its communication on comprehensive and timely updates to prevent misunderstandings and build trust among stakeholders. The Kingfisher Development Project's message development approach is intended to address misinformation proactively, using comprehensive communication tactics. By emphasizing frequent updates, stakeholder participation and educational programmes, the project hopes to foster trust, minimize unfavorable impressions, and create a better-informed community. This strategy not only boosts project credibility, but it also creates a collaborative environment in which stakeholders feel appreciated and heard.

In response to this, one of the respondents said:

To tackle this, the project has focused on delivering timely and comprehensive updates. By making sure that accurate information is readily available, we can

clarify misconceptions before they take root. It's essential that we engage directly with the community; when people can voice their questions and concerns, it helps prevent misinformation from spreading.

In another interview, another respondent said:

We also utilize various communication channels, such as community meetings, social media and newsletters, to ensure that our messages reach a wide audience. This way, we can connect with different segments of the community effectively. Additionally, I believe in the value of educational campaigns. By informing stakeholders about the project's goals, processes and benefits, we can help demystify it and foster a better understanding.

4.5.3 Multichannel communication strategy

Respondents indicated that the process of message development in Kingfisher Development Project involves a multichannel communication strategy. The interviewees highlighted the use of various communication platforms, such as community meetings, social media and newsletters, to reach diverse audiences. This multifaceted approach helps ensure that information is accessible and reaches all stakeholders. This comprehensive approach ensures that information is both accessible and effectively disseminated to all stakeholders involved, promoting greater transparency and understanding within the community.

In the realm of marketing and relationship management, Jordan et al. (2020) developed a theory of multiformat communication, which includes multichannel strategies. Their research highlighted the importance of using various digital and traditional formats to enhance relationship marketing. They emphasized that different communication characteristics, such as visual cues and synchronicity, can significantly impact the effectiveness of the communication strategy.

4.5.4 Formal protocol for engagement

Participants in the study asserted that the process of message development at Kingfisher Development Project involves a formal protocol for engagement. The interviewees highlighted an

organised approach to community participation, with inquiries directed first to CLOs. Continuous phone follow-up is used to ensure that these requests are recognised, demonstrating an effort to keep communication flowing, albeit with some problems.

This was confirmed by one of the respondents who said:

Most of the time we reach out to CLOs who in turn share/communicate with communities. We empower the communities that directly write officially to the project implementers. The communities are more respected and listened to. For CSOs, they take longer to respond to the invitation, and sometimes we are asked to write to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development. This is a long process, thus ineffective to communication.

Similarly, another respondent stressed:

Yes, for community engagement, we always reach out to the CLO first since he/she is so attached to communities. However, we ensure that our requests are heard and attended to through continuous calling via phone.

4.5.5 The model of communication being abrupt

Participants in the FGDs asserted that the model and process of communications at Kingfisher Development Project is rather abrupt. This hinders effective participation of intended participants, and thus affects its effectiveness. The overall communication strategy is perceived as unappealing and not inclusive, particularly regarding the sharing of project updates and stakeholder engagement. This limitation hampers the effectiveness of message dissemination, especially to host communities.

One of the participants in a FGD, when asked about the model of communication at the Kingfisher Development Project, replied:

We are frequently left in the dark. The updates are inconsistent and lack context, making it difficult for us to interact effectively. It appears like our problems are not emphasised, and the communication does not reflect our requirements as community members.

This sentiment underlines the discontent with the current methods, underlining the need for a more inclusive and consistent communication strategy that truly includes host communities and successfully resolves their issues.

The findings of this study align with those of Pokiak (2020), who identified several barriers to effective communication in community-based projects, particularly emphasising the challenges posed by abrupt communication models. It found that sudden changes in communication strategies often lead to confusion and mistrust among community members. The lack of consistent and timely updates was noted as a critical factor that hampers community engagement and participation. The study noted that when communities feel excluded from the communication process, it not only affects their involvement but can also lead to negative perceptions of the project itself.

4.5.6 Transparency in message development

Participants highlighted that transparency is a vital element in the process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project. They emphasized that messages should not only be clear and timely but also openly disclose critical information such as compensation procedures, environmental safeguards, and project timelines. Transparent communication was seen as essential for reducing community fears of corruption and hidden dealings, while also reinforcing accountability among project implementers. Respondents noted that when messages are developed with openness and shared consistently, communities feel respected and included in the project's progress. Conversely, delays or withholding of information were said to fuel mistrust and speculation, undermining the credibility of the communication process.

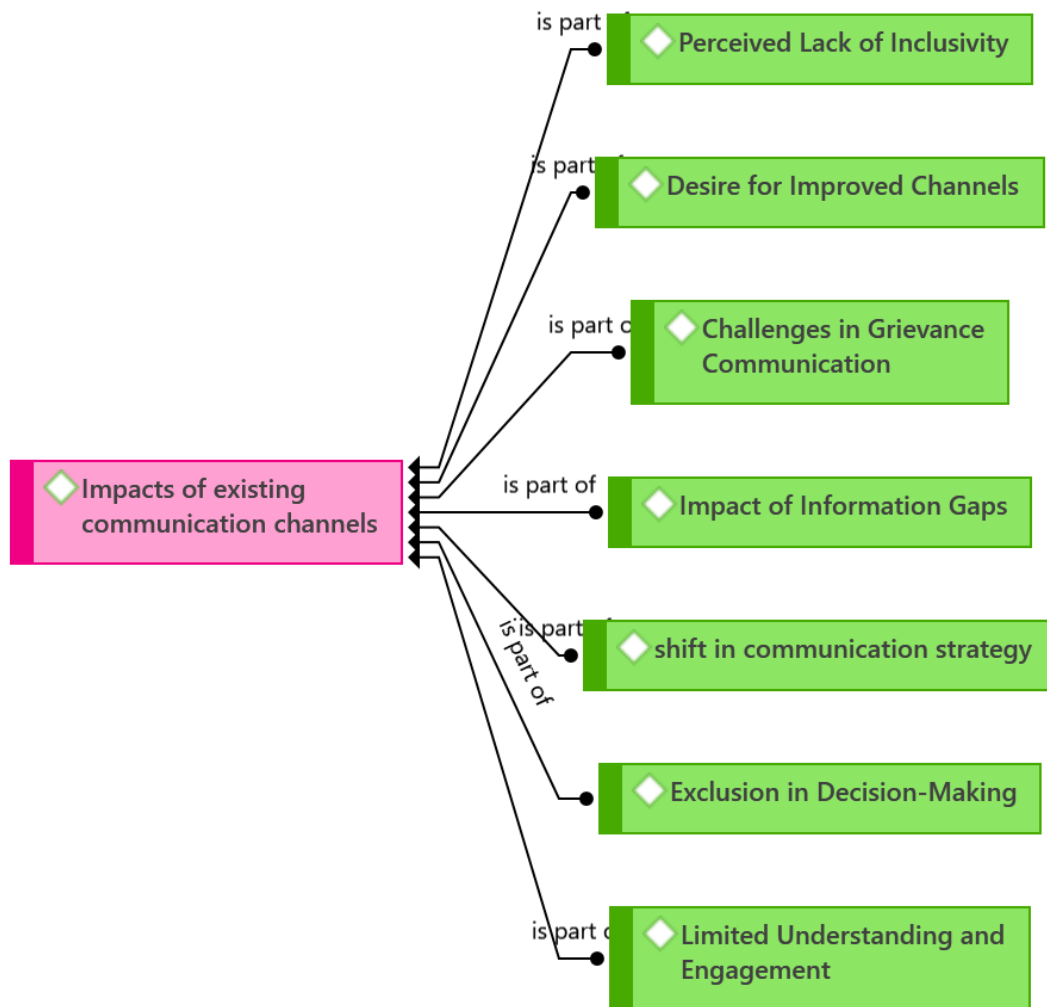
One participant remarked:

"Transparency in how messages are developed and shared is very important. When we see details about compensation or environmental plans clearly communicated, it builds trust. But when information is delayed or incomplete, people start doubting the intentions of the project."

This underscores the need for transparency to be embedded in every stage of message development, ensuring that communication is not only informative but also accountable, thereby strengthening stakeholder confidence in the Kingfisher Development Project

4.6 Findings on how people utilise the existing communication in Kingfisher Development Project

Figure 7: *ATLAS.ti network output of the effect of the existing channels of communication on people's behaviour patterns in the Kingfisher Development Project*



: Source: Primary data (2024).

4.6.1 Perceived lack of inclusivity

Participants in the focus groups indicated that the current channels of communication at the Kingfisher Development Project are exclusive and that the project's communication style is neither appealing nor inclusive. This perception can lead to community disengagement, as individuals believe their voices are not heard or respected, resulting in diminished trust in the project.

This was supported by a key informant in the project, who stated:

Among all oil and gas projects, the Kingfisher Development Project communication approach is not appealing and inclusive to everyone. There is limited information sharing regarding project developments and stakeholder engagement. There would be platforms for sharing information, such as stakeholder engagements regarding the project; however, such engagements have occurred at the national level, leaving host communities with little information about the project.

The findings are in agreement with the findings of Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) who noted that many organisations face similar challenges in ensuring their communication is inclusive. For example, inclusive communication strategies are essential in diverse workplaces to ensure everyone feels valued and understood. These strategies can help reduce misunderstandings and improve overall project efficiency.

Fostering an understanding and supportive atmosphere benefits not only neurodivergent individuals but also the company as a whole, making it more lively, equitable, and productive. Inclusive communications may help the organisation achieve this goal; and getting started is simple. Better communication leads to a stronger workforce, allowing you to confidently embrace new ideas, and enabling the staff to perform to their full potential (Sumelius & Smale, 2021).

4.6.2 Desire for improved communication channels

Respondents advocated using current communication channels, such as social media and messaging systems, to improve information exchange. The demand for openness and regular information signals a change toward more engaged and proactive community behaviour if their recommendations are implemented.

The mention of social media platforms for stakeholder engagement indicates a shift in communication strategy. If utilized effectively, these platforms could enhance transparency and foster a more responsive relationship between the project and the community, encouraging greater participation and feedback.

From one FGD, one of the participants said:

If the project could use WhatsApp or Facebook to share updates, we would feel more involved and informed about what's happening. It's important for us to have real-time information so we can actively participate in discussions and decisions.

The statement expresses the community's desire for immediate and accessible communication channels. By utilising social media and messaging tools, the project might not only increase transparency but also build a sense of ownership among community members. Such participation is likely to result in more proactive behaviour, in which individuals feel empowered to contribute to discussions, express concerns, and provide feedback on project progress. This move toward inclusive communication may eventually improve the overall connection between project implementers and the impacted communities, creating a collaborative atmosphere for addressing problems and boosting project success.

This is in line with Njuguna (2021) who argues that the establishment of communication between the various stakeholders in the organisation affects efficiency. So, a careful plan of enhancing improved communication channels should be put in place. The more improved communication channels would help the managers respond faster to problems.

4.6.3 Hindrance to grievance solving

Respondents believe that there are challenges in grievance solving at the Kingfisher project. The interviewees indicated that while grievances committees exist, their ineffectiveness can lead to a breakdown in trust. Community members may resort to alternative methods, such as media coverage, to address grievances, which can escalate tensions and public scrutiny. The uncertainty regarding whether Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) effectively communicate grievances to upper management can lead to frustration among community members. This lack of confidence in the grievance mechanism may prompt residents to seek alternative routes, such as media engagement, to voice their concerns.

One of the participants in the FGD said:

For over four years, from the time of land acquisition to compensation, the project-affected persons have continued to engage with the Kingfisher project, even as new issues arise due to ongoing developments. They rely on grievance handling

processes to address their concerns; however, these are not effective in handling our cases.

In addition, a male participant in the interview had this to say:

The project implementers are difficult to reach, and we are also unsure whether the CLOs effectively pass on information and grievances from the communities to the top management of CNOOC, the main contractor of the project.

The findings are supported by Abellera et al. (2023) who noted that the grievances committee also promotes effective and open communication among workers as it strives to resolve grievances and evaluate the operations of the business. Moreover, the grievances committee has also influenced the way managers instruct/lead their employees. Not only is it quick and easy, but also comprehensible on the employees' end.

4.6.4 Limited understanding of the communication climate

Participants indicated that the communication climate is poorly understood by various stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations. This lack of clarity leads to minimal engagement from both sides, affecting collaboration and feedback mechanisms.

One of the respondents said:

One of the main challenges we encounter is that many stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations (CSOs), do not understand the communication climate around the Kingfisher Development Project. This lack of clarity prevents effective interaction. When CSOs do not completely understand the project's communication protocols, it results in less interaction and limits prospects for meaningful collaboration.

Without clear communication, feedback mechanisms suffer, and we miss out on valuable insights that could enhance our approach. It's crucial for us to bridge this gap, ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of how to engage with the project. By improving transparency and communication, we can foster

stronger relationships and encourage more active participation from CSOs and other community members.

The findings are in line with Arnoldsson and Malak (2021) who argue that without clear communication, stakeholders may lose sight of the bigger picture, misunderstand goals or become unmotivated and uninspired. By not communicating clearly through virtual channels, productivity decreases. Not being able to communicate as clearly as one would in person was a common virtual risk pointed out by the interviewed managers.

4.6.5 Exclusion from the decision-making process

Participants in the FGDs asserted that the current existing channels of communication at King fisher Development Project exclude them from the decision-making process. Community people reported feeling isolated from decision-making processes, which contributed to conflicts in the project areas. This exclusion perpetuates feelings of disempowerment, discouraging community people from actively participating in project-related activities.

During the FGDs, one of the participants said:

We have never been involved in decision-making. That's why there are conflicts in the operation areas of the project. Given that even the LC chairpersons have not been involved in meetings, we thus call for joint efforts by the project implementers to work closely with the LC system in sharing information and updates about the project.

Several researchers have investigated concerns surrounding exclusion from decision-making processes and its influence on communities. For example, Bell and Reed (2022) created the "Tree of Participation" model to promote more inclusive and empowered participatory decision-making processes. Their findings emphasised the importance of meaningful participation in improving openness, accountability and equity in public administration.

Furthermore, scholars such as Bua and Escobar (2018) have examined the constraints and limitations of participatory decision-making in reality, highlighting the need for authentic and effective participation to effectively empower underrepresented groups.

4.6.6 Transparency in communication utilisation

Participants emphasized that transparency plays a central role in how communities engage with the Kingfisher Development Project's existing communication channels. They noted that when information is openly shared—such as details on compensation, environmental safeguards, and project timelines—community members are more likely to trust the communication channels and actively participate in discussions. Conversely, when communication is perceived as opaque or selective, suspicions of corruption and hidden dealings arise, discouraging engagement and prompting communities to seek alternative avenues such as media coverage or civil society advocacy. Respondents stressed that transparency not only improves accountability but also empowers communities to make informed decisions and to monitor project activities more effectively.

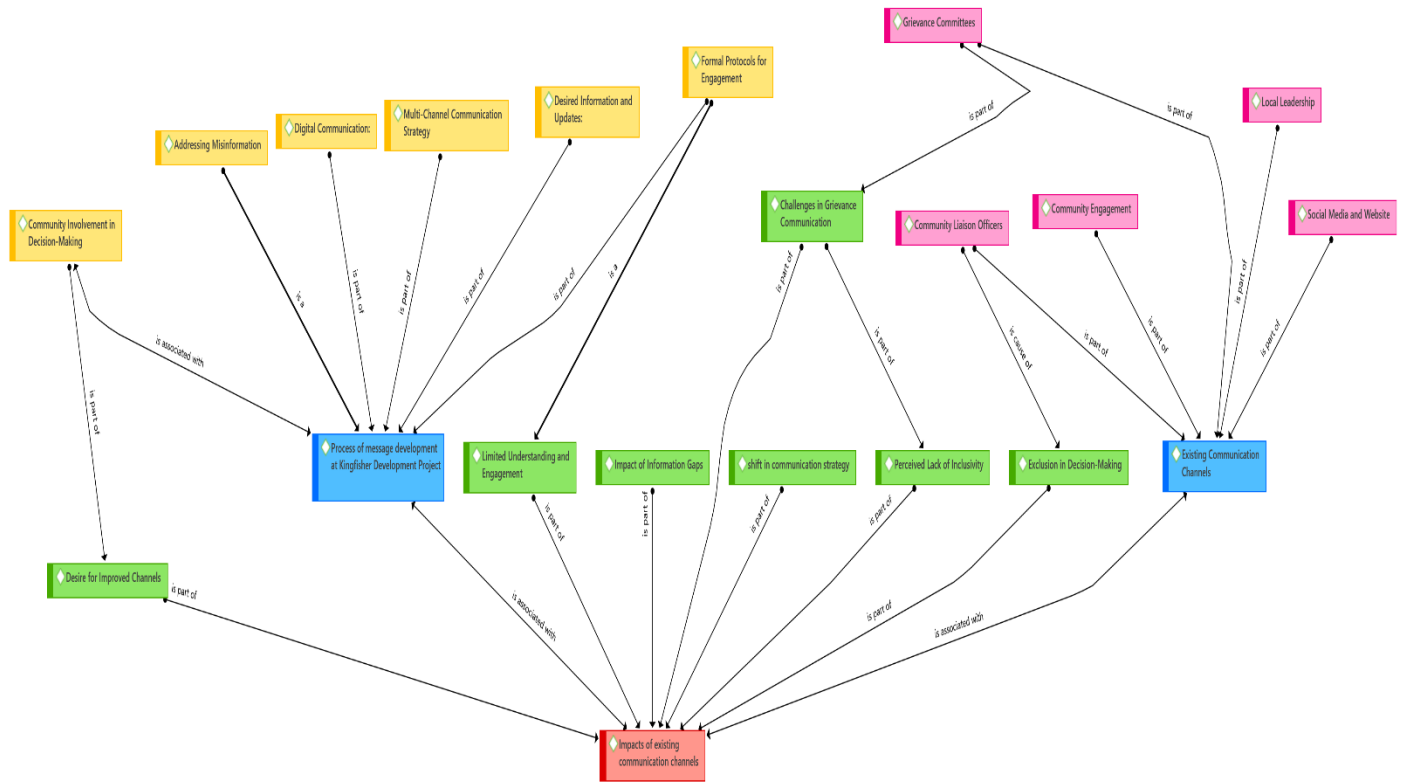
One participant remarked:

"Transparency is what makes us use these communication channels. If we see clear updates and open information, we feel encouraged to engage. But when details are hidden, we lose confidence and stop participating."

This finding underscores the importance of embedding transparency into all communication channels, ensuring that communities view them not merely as information outlets but as credible platforms for accountability and dialogue. By fostering openness, the Kingfisher Development Project can strengthen trust, enhance participation, and reduce the likelihood of conflict or disengagement

4.7 A Thematic Causal Map

Figure 8: Thematic causal map of the study



Development Project by visualising the core themes discovered using the data. It determines the core areas of communication, such as the use of community feedback, resolving misinformation, multichannel communication strategies and formal participation protocols. The map visualises in a descriptive way how the process integrates multiple communication strategies such as reminders at the right time, empowering communities and utilisation of different channels like social media and community forums for encouraging participation. Further, it indicates more participative and transparent communication to facilitate greater community participation, as observed from participants' observations on the effectiveness of communications in the project. This map helps to bring the findings together, showing how different communication elements interact to shape stakeholder perceptions and behaviours, thereby driving the overall success and credibility of the project.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Discussion on the Existing Communication Structures in Kingfisher Development Project

The study found that Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) play a significant role in facilitating communication between the Kingfisher Development Project and host communities, ensuring concerns are addressed, and fostering trust. Despite their importance, CLOs are sometimes hard to reach, and regular follow-ups are necessary to ensure requests are heard and acted upon.

The findings are supported by Bebbington et al. (2017) who found that CLOs play a critical role in developing and maintaining relationships with communities in and around the sites of company operations. When their role is structured and supported well, they make an essential contribution to a company's social license to operate; they are key to the implementation of international standards and other corporate commitments; they provide insight and local knowledge, which enhances the company's ability to manage a range of risks and uncertainties; and they are a familiar and accessible face with whom community members can raise concerns, realise opportunities and resolve grievances.

The study also found that direct communication is a key approach used in the Kingfisher Development Project, valued for its clarity, honesty and efficiency. Participants emphasised that empowering communities to communicate directly with project implementers enhances respect and responsiveness, while reliance on CLOs sometimes leads to delays in addressing concerns.

The findings are consistent with the argument of Nyandongo and Davids (2017) that direct communication allows for high frequency and volume of direct communication during and after meetings. Direct contact keeps project members up to date. Problems are identified and solved through direct conversation. The direct and frequent communication among team members and with the client representatives facilitates discussion of the features planned for deployment in the

current iteration. In addition, a grooming session for the development team before the real planning meeting helps to eliminate misconceptions through direct communication.

The study found out that the Kingfisher Development Project utilises social media and its website for effective communication with stakeholders, facilitating real-time updates and broad outreach. However, participants highlighted the need for a balanced approach, combining digital channels with traditional methods such as community meetings and local radio to ensure all community members, including older individuals, are adequately informed.

The results concur with Kasongo and Abongdia (2021) who found that social media plays a significant role in the communication sector. Social media may be used solely to share substance, profile, hypothesis, issues, involvement and viewpoint; it is also widely employed in businesses and communities. Many firms now use social media for internal communication, which has an impact on the bottom line. To ensure ongoing collaboration and communication across all teams, managers in every organisation play a crucial role in incorporating these social media platforms into initiatives.

Additionally, the study noted that local leaders play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the community and the project team, increasing credibility and participation. By facilitating discussions and conveying community concerns, they create a more open and trustworthy communication environment.

The findings concur with Obeta et al. (2021) who argue that local leadership is the avenue for managing and sustaining development efforts and programmes in Nigerian rural communities. Developing rural communities entails investigating the factors that contribute to rural communities' underdevelopment. It also includes activities taken through essential public policies and well-articulated programmes to eliminate poverty in rural communities by providing infrastructure such as power, housing, roads and bridges, and rural water supplies, among other things.

Furthermore, a study by Saha (2020) highlighted the importance of participatory communication, where community members are actively involved at all stages of project development. This approach ensures that communication is bottom-up, empowering participants in the decision-making process. The study found that leveraging local leaders and trusted intermediaries, such as village chiefs and elders, was crucial for effective information dissemination and community engagement.

The study further revealed that transparency is a critical dimension of the existing communication structures in the Kingfisher Development Project. Participants emphasized that open disclosure of information regarding compensation, environmental safeguards, and project timelines fosters trust and accountability, while limited or delayed communication fuels suspicion and disengagement. Transparent communication structures ensure that communities are not only informed but also empowered to monitor project activities and hold implementers accountable. These findings align with the arguments of Moffat and Zhang (2014), who contend that transparency in communication is central to building and maintaining a company's social license to operate. Their study demonstrated that when communities perceive communication as open and credible, they are more likely to engage constructively, whereas opaque communication practices often lead to mistrust, conflict, and reputational risks for the project.

5.2 Analysis of the process of message development in Kingfisher Development Project

The study found that the Kingfisher Development Project relies on community feedback for effective message development, with direct engagement ensuring quicker responses. However, delays occur when issues need to be escalated to higher authorities, and the low involvement of CSOs hampers timely communication.

Several scholars have explored the use of community feedback in developing messages for community projects. For instance, Moreno et al. (2020) emphasised reflective practices such as reasoning and active listening, while Jackson et al. (2019) highlighted the power of feedback loops in empowering residents and driving systemic change. Additionally, the Urban Institute (2021) stressed the importance of asking the right questions to foster genuine participation and truthful responses. These studies collectively underscore the value of involving community members in the feedback process to create effective and relevant messages.

According to the interviewees, inadequate information leads to negative perceptions of the project. Thus, Kingfisher Development Project has based its communication on comprehensive and timely updates to prevent misunderstandings and build trust among stakeholders.

Recent literature supports the Kingfisher Development Project's communication strategy. For instance, a case analysis of Kingfisher PLC's operational quality highlights the importance of comprehensive communication and stakeholder engagement in maintaining operational quality and trust (Kingfisher PLC, 2023). Additionally, the Kingfisher PLC full-year results report emphasises the role of strategic communication in building brand reputation and stakeholder trust, aligning with the project's approach to frequent updates and educational programs (Kingfisher PLC, 2023). Furthermore, research on project managers' competencies underscores the significance of communication skills and stakeholder engagement in project success, supporting the project's focus on direct community engagement and addressing misinformation (Doe et al., 2023).

Respondents indicated that the process of message development at Kingfisher Development Project involves a multichannel communication strategy. The interviews highlighted the use of various communication platforms, such as community meetings, social media and newsletters, to reach diverse audiences.

The findings of this study are in line with several scholars who have explored similar multichannel communication strategies in various contexts. For instance, researchers like Bruno et al. (2023) have examined how higher education institutions utilise a mix of communication channels, such as websites, social media and student brochures, to reach a broad audience. Their findings suggest that while universities focus on institutional values, they tailor specific channels to different stakeholders to promote effective communication.

In the realm of marketing and relationship management, Jordan et al. (2020) developed a theory of multiformat communication, which includes multichannel strategies. Their research highlighted the importance of using various digital and traditional formats to enhance relationship marketing.

They emphasised that different communication characteristics, such as visual cues and synchronicity, can significantly impact the effectiveness of the communication strategy.

The findings are supported by Mello et al. (2020) and Nderitu (2018) who noted that the establishment of a formal protocol with clear rules and procedures for interagency information sharing of case-level data ensures confidentiality of the information. Creating a formal protocol for engagement and communication in community projects involves understanding your audience, setting clear objectives, providing regular updates, using diverse communication channels, implementing feedback mechanisms, ensuring inclusive participation, evaluating and reporting on effectiveness, and fostering partnerships with local organisations and leaders. These steps help build trust, keep the community informed, and ensure that all voices are heard, ultimately enhancing participation and the success of the project.

Participants in the FGDs asserted that the model and process of communications at the Kingfisher Development Project is abrupt. This hinders the effective participation of intended participants and thus affects its effectiveness. The overall communication strategy is perceived as unappealing and not inclusive, particularly regarding the sharing of project updates and stakeholder engagement. This limitation hampers the effectiveness of message dissemination, especially to host communities.

The findings of this study also align with those of Pokiak (2020) who identified several barriers to effective communication in community-based projects, particularly emphasizing the challenges posed by abrupt communication models. It found that sudden changes in communication strategies often lead to confusion and mistrust among community members. The lack of consistent and timely updates was noted as a critical factor that hampers community engagement and participation. The study found out that when communities feel excluded from the communication process, it not only affects their involvement but can also leads to negative perceptions of the project itself.

The analysis further revealed that transparency is a fundamental aspect of effective message development in the Kingfisher Development Project. Participants emphasized that messages which openly disclose project details—such as compensation procedures, environmental safeguards, and

timelines—are more credible and foster trust among stakeholders. Transparent communication ensures that communities are not only informed but also empowered to hold project implementers accountable, thereby reducing fears of corruption and hidden dealings. These findings are consistent with the work of Eweje (2006), who argued that transparency in communication is central to building trust and legitimacy in extractive industry projects. His study demonstrated that when project messages are developed and shared with openness, communities are more likely to engage constructively, whereas opaque or selective communication practices often fuel suspicion, disengagement, and conflict.

5.3 Utilisation of the Existing communication channels in Kingfisher Development Project

Participants in the focus group discussions indicated that the current channels of communication in the Kingfisher Development Project are exclusive and that the Kingfisher project's communication style is neither appealing nor inclusive.

Our findings are in agreement with the findings of Kuknor and Bhattacharya (2022) who noted that many organisations face similar challenges in trying to ensure that their communication is inclusive. For example, inclusive communication strategies are essential in diverse workplaces to ensure everyone feels valued and understood. These strategies can help reduce misunderstandings and improve overall project efficiency.

Fostering an understanding and supportive atmosphere benefits not only neurodivergent individuals but also the company as a whole, making it more lively, equitable and productive. Inclusive communications may help an organisation achieve this goal, and getting started is simple. Better communication leads to a stronger workforce, allowing one to confidently embrace new ideas, and enabling staff to perform to their full potential (Sumelius & Smale, 2021).

Respondents advocated for the usage of current communication channels such as social media and messaging systems to improve information exchange. The demand for openness and regular information signals a change toward more engaged and proactive community behaviour if their recommendations are implemented.

This is in line with Njuguna (2021) who argued that the establishment of communication between the various stakeholders in the organization affects efficiency. So, a careful plan of enhancing improved communication channels should be put in place. The more improved communication channels help the managers respond faster to problems.

Community members may resort to alternative methods, such as media coverage, to address grievances, which can escalate tensions and public scrutiny. The uncertainty regarding whether Community Liaison Officers effectively communicate grievances to upper management can lead to frustration among community members.

The findings are supported by Abellera et al. (2023) who noted that the grievances committee also promotes effective and open communication among workers as it strives to resolve grievances and evaluate the operations of the business. Moreover, the grievances committee has also influenced the way managers instruct/lead their employees. Not only is it quick and easy, but it is also comprehensible on the employee's end.

Participants indicated that the communication climate is poorly understood by various stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations (CSOs). This lack of clarity leads to minimal engagement from both sides, affecting collaboration and feedback mechanisms.

The findings are also in line with Arnoldsson and Malak (2021) who argue that without clear communication, stakeholders may lose sight of the bigger picture, misunderstand goals or become unmotivated and uninspired. By not communicating clearly through virtual channels, productivity decreases. Not being able to communicate as clearly as one would physically in person, was a common virtual risk pointed out by the interviewed managers.

The study further revealed that transparency significantly influences how communities utilise the existing communication channels in the Kingfisher Development Project. Participants noted that when communication channels openly disclose project information—such as compensation procedures, environmental safeguards, and stakeholder engagement plans—community members are more likely to trust and actively use these structures. Conversely, when communication is

perceived as opaque or selective, suspicions of corruption and hidden dealings arise, discouraging participation and prompting communities to seek alternative avenues such as media coverage. These findings resonate with the work of Hilson and Murck (2000), who argue that transparency in communication is essential for building trust and legitimacy in extractive industry projects. Their study demonstrated that transparent communication practices not only enhance accountability but also empower communities to monitor project activities and engage constructively, while lack of openness often leads to mistrust, disengagement, and conflict

5.4 Exclusion from the Decision-making Process

Participants in the FGDs asserted that the existing channels of communication at Kingfisher Development Project exclude them from the decision-making process. Community people reported feeling isolated from decision-making processes, which contributed to conflict in the project areas. This exclusion perpetuates feelings of disempowerment, discouraging community people from actively participating in project-related activities.

Several researchers have investigated concerns surrounding exclusion from decision-making processes and its influence on communities. For example, Bell and Reed (2022) created the "Tree of Participation" model to promote more inclusive and empowered participatory decision-making processes. Their findings emphasized the importance of meaningful participation in improving openness, accountability and equity in public administration.

Furthermore, scholars such as Bua and Escobar (2018) have examined the constraints and limitations of participatory decision-making in reality, highlighting the need for authentic and effective participation to effectively empower underrepresented groups.

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings obtained from the study as discussed in chapter four of this report. This chapter also includes the areas that require further research.

6.2 Summary of the Study Findings

The sample size information indicated a 62.5% response rate. Although this is a qualitative study, the percentage was calculated quantitatively. Demographically, the majority of respondents were male (66.67%), while females accounted for 33.3%. Additionally, most of the respondents were aged between 30 to 45 years. The education level of the respondents was predominantly at the primary education level. Additionally, over 35% of the respondents had more than five years of experience in project development. Therefore, the engaged respondents were stakeholders with significant knowledge and exposure to participatory communication in the Kingfisher Development Project. The study, therefore, recommends appropriate communication interventions based on these findings.

6.2.1 The existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project

The study examined the existing communication structures within the Kingfisher Development Project, highlighting several key components. Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) play a vital role as intermediaries between project implementers and local communities, facilitating two-way communication, fostering trust, and addressing community issues. Direct communication methods were noted for their clarity and efficiency, allowing communities to directly engage with project implementers, although reliance on formal channels could delay responses. Participants emphasized the importance of social media and the project website for real-time information sharing, especially among younger community members, while also recognizing the need for traditional methods to reach less tech-savvy individuals. Grievances committees were established to address community complaints, but their effectiveness was hindered by delayed responses, leading some to seek media intervention. Transparency emerged as a critical factor across all

communication structures, with participants stressing that open disclosure of information on compensation, environmental safeguards, and project timelines is essential for building trust and reducing fears of corruption or hidden dealings. Lastly, collaboration with local leadership was highlighted as crucial for credibility and trust, enabling more effective communication and ensuring that community concerns were voiced to project management. Overall, while there are structured communication channels in place, their effectiveness is challenged by accessibility issues, the need for timely responses, and the demand for greater transparency.

6.2.2 The process of message development at Kingfisher Development Project

The process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project emphasises community feedback, addressing misinformation, and employing a multichannel communication strategy. Participants highlighted that direct engagement with community members allows for quicker responses and fosters a sense of respect and responsiveness. While CLOs facilitate communication, the reliance on them can slow down the process, especially when issues escalate to higher authorities. To combat misinformation, the project focuses on delivering timely and comprehensive updates through various channels, including community meetings, social media and newsletters, ensuring that information is accessible to all stakeholders. Transparency in the development and sharing of these messages was also noted as essential, with participants stressing that open disclosure of compensation details, environmental safeguards, and project timelines helps reduce suspicion and build confidence in the communication process. However, the communication model is perceived as abrupt and unappealing, limiting effective participation and engagement. The study underscores the importance of formal protocols for community engagement and the need for a more inclusive, transparent, and effective communication strategy to enhance stakeholder involvement and trust in the project.

6.2.3 The effect of the existing channels of communication on people's behaviour patterns in Kingfisher Development Project

Participants in the Kingfisher Development Project perceive existing communication channels as exclusive and ineffective, leading to community disengagement and diminished trust. This sentiment is reinforced by limited information sharing at the local level, with a key informant noting lack of inclusive communication strategies. Respondents expressed a desire for improved channels, particularly through social media and messaging systems, to facilitate real-time updates

and foster community involvement. Transparency was also highlighted as a critical factor, with participants stressing that open disclosure of information on compensation, environmental safeguards, and project timelines would strengthen accountability and encourage greater use of the existing channels. However, challenges persist in grievance resolution, with the ineffectiveness in grievance committees prompting community members to seek media avenues for their concerns. Moreover, a limited understanding of the communication climate among civil society organisations hinders engagement, contributing to ineffective collaboration. Finally, feelings of exclusion from decision-making processes exacerbate conflict in project areas, with participants emphasising the need for closer collaboration with local leaders to ensure meaningful participation.

6.3 Conclusions

6.3.1 The existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project

The Kingfisher Development Project has incorporated many communication mechanisms, including Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), who serve as liaisons between project implementers and local communities. These officers play an important role in fostering two-way conversation, which is necessary for creating trust and addressing community issues. However, the effectiveness of these structures is hindered by several factors, including accessibility challenges and reliance on formal communication methods that can delay responses. Additionally, the limited reach of communication efforts, particularly among less tech-savvy individuals, further exacerbates the issue. Transparency in the communication process was also highlighted as essential, with participants stressing that open disclosure of information on compensation, environmental safeguards, and project timelines would strengthen accountability and reduce community fears of corruption or hidden dealings. To enhance community engagement and trust, it is vital for the project to address these barriers, ensure transparent and inclusive communication, and improve the overall responsiveness of its channels so that all community members feel heard and valued.

6.3.2 The process of message development in Kingfisher Development Project

- The process of message development at the Kingfisher Development Project emphasizes the importance of incorporating community feedback to create relevant and effective messages.
- Participants highlighted that direct engagement with community members enables quicker responses and fosters respect.
- Although CLOs play a key role in facilitating communication, reliance on them can slow down the message development process, particularly when issues need to be escalated to higher authorities.
- To address misinformation, the project focuses on delivering timely updates through various channels, such as community meetings, social media and newsletters.
- The communication model is perceived as abrupt and unappealing, which limits effective participation and engagement.
- The study stresses the need for formal protocols for community engagement and calls for a more inclusive communication strategy that promotes stakeholder involvement and builds trust in the project.

6. 3.3 The effect of the existing channels of communication on people’s behaviour patterns in Kingfisher Development Project

- Participants report that the Kingfisher Development Project’s current communication channels are perceived as exclusive and ineffective, leading to disengagement and a loss of community confidence.
- A lack of thorough information sharing at the local level contributes to this sentiment, with key informants noting that inclusive communication tactics are rare.
- Respondents have expressed a significant demand for improved communication channels, particularly through social media and messaging systems, to allow real-time information and increase community participation.

- Persistent challenges in grievance resolution, such as the ineffectiveness of grievances committees, have led community members to turn to media channels to voice their concerns.
- A limited understanding of the communication climate among civil society organisations hinders meaningful engagement and collaboration.
- Feelings of exclusion from decision-making processes further exacerbate tensions in project areas.
- Participants emphasise the need for closer collaboration with local leaders to ensure that community perspectives are meaningfully represented, fostering a more inclusive environment that encourages active participation and addresses conflicts effectively.

6.4 Contribution of the Study

The findings from the Kingfisher Development Project contribute to theory by emphasizing the importance of inclusive communication models that prioritise community engagement and feedback loops, offering a framework for understanding the empowerment or marginalisation of community voices in development projects.

Secondly, in terms of policy, the study advocates for formal protocols that enhance inclusivity in communication processes, promoting transparency, timely information sharing and effective grievance resolution, which can lead to more sustainable outcomes. Thirdly, for practitioners, the research highlights the need for diverse communication channels, including social media and traditional methods, to foster real-time feedback and enhance community engagement. By strengthening ties with local leadership and civil society organizations, project implementers can build trust and create a collaborative environment that empowers community members to actively participate in decision-making, ultimately leading to more successful project outcomes.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted around the Kingfisher Development Project, the study recommends several actions to enhance communication, community engagement and project success.

Firstly, the project management team should improve communication mechanisms by educating and equipping Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) to provide accurate and timely information. Regular training sessions should be organised to provide CLOs with the necessary skills for effective community participation and grievance resolution. This will assist in developing trust, and facilitate the flow of information from the project to the local population.

Secondly, the community engagement department should promote participatory communication by incorporating community members in decision-making processes from the start. This should include hosting regular community meetings to solicit comments and offer developments, as well as engaging local leaders in conversations. This strategy will promote trust, ownership and a sense of shared responsibility among community members.

Thirdly, the grievances committee should strengthen grievance mechanisms to ensure they are more effective and accessible. A transparent process for handling grievances must be established, with regular updates provided to community members about the status of their concerns. This will enhance trust in the grievance resolution process and encourage communities to voice their issues more freely.

Fourthly, the project should embed transparency across all communication structures. This includes openly disclosing information on compensation procedures, environmental safeguards, and project timelines through multiple channels such as newsletters, social media, and community meetings. By institutionalising transparency, the project can reduce fears of corruption or hidden dealings, strengthen accountability, and build lasting trust with stakeholders.

Fifthly, the human resources and local content teams should prioritise local content and employment opportunities by implementing a policy that focuses on hiring from the host communities. This approach will ensure that the project directly supports local livelihoods, fostering goodwill and reducing potential conflicts within the community.

Finally, the community relations team should establish feedback systems that allow community members to express issues and provide input. This may include toll-free numbers and regular community conversations. By making these processes more accessible, the project can increase

community participation and involvement in conversations, ultimately leading to better project outcomes.

6.5 Areas for Further Research

One key area for further research is the impact of communication strategies on community engagement. Future studies could investigate how various communication methods influence the levels of participation and trust among community members in oil and gas projects. Understanding which strategies foster stronger connections could enable organizations to tailor their approaches for better community involvement.

Another important subject to investigate is the long-term implications of community benefits from the Kingfisher Development Project. Research might concentrate on measuring the long-term socioeconomic effects on local communities, such as job generation, skill development and overall quality of life. This analysis would provide useful insights into the sustainability of the advantages achieved by the initiative.

A comparative investigation of grievance processes across various oil and gas operations could provide valuable information. Such research could reveal best practices and systemic issues in grievance resolution processes, ultimately leading to increased efficacy in dealing with community concerns within the Kingfisher Development Project and other projects.

Finally, understanding community perspectives and cultural dynamics surrounding oil and gas developments is critical. Researching how local cultural elements impact community attitudes can assist organizations in developing more culturally sensitive communication and engagement strategies, and building stronger relationships with the affected communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Dear interviewee,

I am LYDIA AINOMUGISHA, a student from Makerere University. I am conducting a study about Participatory Communication as a Tool for Enhancing Transparency in Uganda's Oil and Gas Sector in reference to Kingfisher Development Project. You have been chosen to participate in this study since you are a potential person that we can rely on. You are kindly requested to spare some time to participate in this interview. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential since this research is solely meant for academic purposes.

Part One: Personal Profile of Respondents

Section A: General information

- I. Gender: Male Female
- II. Age bracket: (18-30, 31-45, 45-60, Above 60 years)
- III. Current organisation.
- IV. Designation.
- V. Academic qualifications. P7..... S4..... S6.....Bachelor's Degree..... Masters Degree + (Others).....
- VI. Working experience (in years).
- VII. Department

Part Two: How Participatory Communication Can Foster Transparency and Acceptance of the Kingfisher Development Project and Recommend Appropriate Communication Interventions

Section A: Review of the existing communication structures in Kingfisher Development Project.

1. General Communication Overview
 - o How would you describe the overall communication climate within the project?
 - o What channels (e.g., meetings, emails, reports) are commonly used for communication?

- What challenges or bottlenecks do you encounter in the communication flow?
- 2. Stakeholder Communication
 - How do you engage with external stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, local communities, other development partners,)?
 - Are there formal communication protocols for stakeholder engagement?
 - How are stakeholder concerns addressed?
- 3. Internal Communication
 - How do team members collaborate and share information?
 - Are there regular team meetings? If so, how effective are they?
 - Is there a central repository for project documents and updates?
- 4. Project Reporting
 - How are project milestones, progress and risks communicated?
 - Who receives project reports, and how often?
 - Are there standardized report templates?
- 5. Decision-Making Communication
 - How are decisions communicated to relevant parties?
 - Is there transparency in decision-making processes?
 - Why do you think there is no transparency in decision-making processes?
 - How are disagreements or conflicts resolved?
- 6. Feedback Mechanisms
 - How do team members provide feedback on communication processes?
 - Are there mechanisms for continuous improvement of feedback?
 - How is feedback acted upon?
- 7. Technology and Tools
 - What communication tools (software, platforms) are currently used?
 - Are there any limitations or gaps in the existing technology?

Section B: The process of message development at Kingfisher Development Project.

1. What is the overall goal of message development within the Kingfisher Development Project?
2. How do you identify key messages that align with project objectives?

3. What steps are involved in crafting and refining project messages?
4. How do you ensure consistency and clarity across different communication channels?
5. What role does stakeholder input play in shaping project messages?

Section C: The effect of the existing channels of communication on people's behaviour patterns at Kingfisher Development Project

1. Inter-Personal Communication:
 - How frequently do team members engage in face-to-face conversations?
 - What role does interpersonal communication play in decision-making processes?
2. Written Documents:
 - How often are formal documents (such as policies or guidelines) shared within the organisation?
 - How do employees perceive the clarity and effectiveness of written communication?
3. Emails and Digital Channels:
 - How frequently do team members use emails and other digital platforms to communicate?
 - Are there any challenges related to email overload or misinterpretation?
4. Team Meetings and Brainstorming Sessions:
 - How do group discussions impact problem-solving and creativity?
 - Are there specific communication norms during team meetings?
 - How often do you hold team meetings or brainstorming sessions?
5. Feedback Channels:
 - How do feedback mechanisms from managers affect your behaviour?
 - What feedback channels do you use?
 - Do employees feel comfortable providing constructive feedback?

Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion with the Locals

1. **Introduction and Warm-Up:**
 - What do you understand by 'participatory communication'?
 - How familiar are you with the Kingfisher Development Project?

- How long have you worked with Kingfisher Development Project?
 - Why do you think community involvement is essential for successful development projects?
- 2. Understanding Community Perspectives:**
- What are your initial thoughts or concerns about the Kingfisher Development Project?
 - How do you feel about being part of the decision-making process?
 - What information would you like to receive about the project?
- 3. Transparency and Information Sharing:**
- How can we ensure that project updates and decisions are communicated transparently to the community?
 - What channels (e.g., community meetings, flyers, radio) would be most effective for sharing project information?
 - How can we address any misinformation or rumours related to the project?
- 4. Community Participation and Engagement:**
- What role do you see yourself playing in the Kingfisher Development Project?
 - How can we encourage more community members to actively participate?
 - Are there specific communication methods that resonate with the local community?
- 5. Building Trust and Acceptance:**
- What steps can we take to build trust between project stakeholders and the community?
 - How can we involve community leaders or influencers in project communication?
 - What would make you feel more accepting of the project's goals and outcomes?
- 6. Feedback and Continuous Improvement:**
- How can we gather feedback from the community during different project phases?
 - What mechanisms should be in place for community members to express their concerns or suggestions?
 - How can we adapt communication strategies based on community feedback?