



**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION**

**PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA
AT THE MINISTRY OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, KENYA**

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University of Nairobi Library Thesis



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**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
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AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES
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DECLARATION

I hereby confirm that this project is my original work and has not been previously presented in part or totality at any other institution of learning for the award of any degree or diploma.

Signed  Date 07/12/2019

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K50/87619/2016

This research project has been submitted with my approval as the supervisor

Signed  Date 07/12/2019

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this Project to the Public Relations Society Kenya (PRSK) and the Ministry of East African Community (MEAC).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for His grace and faithfulness throughout my study. I acknowledge the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Silas Odongo Oriaso for his invaluable and relentless guidance during the period of conducting this study. I also wish to thank my family for their support and guidance during the pendency of this project. My sincere appreciation goes to the entire School of Journalism and Mass Communication faculty of the University of Nairobi for their encouragement and support. I also wish to acknowledge the support and corporation received from the staff of the Ministry of East African Community who supported this study by freely volunteering the data used in the project. May God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this research was to investigate the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in the Ministry of East African Community. The specific objectives were: to determine the rate of use of social media among employees of the Ministry of East African Community, to examine the social media platforms most preferred for internal communication among employees at East African Community, to explore the communication factors that determine the preference of new media platforms for internal info-sharing among employees at East African Community and to investigate the social media policy guiding internal communication at East African Community. The Technology Acceptance Model and Social Cognitive Theory provided explanation on the uptake of social media, to analyse the communication factors in preferences and the global arenas in government Public Relations practice. The study employed a mixed method approach where two data collection tools, namely: the semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used. The sample size for survey was 80 participants determined through systematic random sampling method. It recorded responses from 70 participants being a return rate of 87.5%. The study also used purposive sampling technique to select three (3) participants for the in-depth interviews. The study analysed qualitative and quantitative data, where the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage generated through the Statistical Packages for Social Scientist version 21 and presented in tables format, while qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis and presented in report and quotations, extensively used to triangulate the survey data. The results indicate that the rate of social media use was relatively low at 42% among employees of the ministry, although social media seemed significant for internal communication. The results also showed that traditional media such as letters and memos were still more trusted for organisational communication than social media, although Facebook was the most preferred of the social media platforms in contexts where social media applied. The study found ease of use of social media, popularity of the platform, accessibility and relevance of social media as the key communication factors that determine social media preference among employees of East African Community. The study concludes that social media use for internal communication is unavoidable with the growth of new media technology in the Kenyan public sectors. The study recommends the need to sensitise people about owning personal social media accounts as prerequisites if they are to maximise the use of social media in their day-to-day communication. The study also recommends the need to dissuade the public from relegating social media to inferior or informal functions yet it is also an important channel of organisational communication. From the results there is need to review communication strategy of organisations to mainstream social media platforms as forms of new media communication in the globalised world.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EABC	East African Business Council
EACJ	East African Court of Justice
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
KEPSA	Kenya Private Sector Association
LVBC	Lake Victoria Basin Commission
EAC	East African Community
PRO	Public Relation Officers
RICS	Regional Integration Centres

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The chapter introduces the study by presenting the background information and issues necessitating this research, the problem statement, the general and specific research objectives, research questions, study justification or rationale, significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study and the operational definition of terms.

1.2 Background Information

The Ministry of East African Community is the face of East Africa in the region and the face of the region in the Nation. It is charged with the responsibility of ensuring proper coordination of all East African related issues and as well, as ensure policies are not only put in place but are also expedited. It is also expected to interlink with the Private Sector through their respective organs and pitch on behalf of the government and the region as a block, while ensuring the “Private sector driven EAC spirit” is realised. The Ministry’s mandate is pegged on six directorates to ensure the aforementioned mandate is Realised and executed. These strategic units are; the in charge of Administration and issues to do with Planning, running of the regional economy, accessing and advising on the Political environment, transport and Agriculture issues also called Productive and Services, transport through from Mombasa Port to Kigali and matters on Social issues, like education and culture. This mandate cuts across the six EAC partner states and therefore calls for a well-coordinated, effective and efficient communication. This is now easier than before due to the development of the global technology which if utilised properly will be the most effective communication channel.

According to Accenture (2012), social media is no longer a new phenomenon but an accepted frontier than is becoming crucial in communication not only in the private but also in the public sector practice. Ranging from blogs, Twitter, and Facebook, Telegram to the wide web that has in a big way changed how citizens (internal and external) get news and sought services at the comfort of their offices. This new phenomenon has sent heads rolling and created a lot of tension and some discomfort for fear of being rendered irrelevant by the fast-emerging technologies. In addition to this, there are many new and emerging forms, right from the mobile phones, new

digitalized computers, cloud that are currently utilised as public communication channel and practice quickly being adopted by public offices to cut on staff maintenance costs. Routledge and Shirky (2008) observes that the greatest concern currently for the public relations practice is how to leverage on these technologies without seemingly compromising their relevance and posterity in their career. This project examined the available material researched on the trends caused by the many platforms occasioned by technology and the unforeseen repercussions as regards to the public service public relations practitioners.

The practice of public relations in the advent of technology in the Ministry of East African Community was be examined in four broad areas. Firstly, by determining the rate of use of these media among those working at the MEAC, examine the social media platforms most preferred for internal communication with employees at MEAC, explore the communication factors that determine the preference of social media platforms for internal communication among employees at MEAC and investigate the social media policy guiding internal communication at MEAC. The areas of study and their impacts were checked in the lenses of the archived information, looking at a certain case, as well as carrying out interviews across the relevant stakeholders.

From a global perspective, social media has become the notepad providing a platform for dynamic, open and uninsulated communication policy and mechanism, which has adversely affected citizen-government communication in a big way, especially in, regards to issues public relations. The Ministry of East African Community ought to acknowledge that social media tools significantly improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others.

According to Smith (2011), public relations officers have today gotten faster, more efficient, accurate and less costly equipment to pass information across the masses, a case that was different in the recent past. This has been enabled by the advent of the new media. Smith (2011) indicates that 40% of those active in surfing are looking for official public institutions data or on topical issues, but there are those also who go online to seek information for advocacy and human rights defence. This gives great opportunities for local governments to engage more effectively.

It is high time those mandated to pass information to the great majority embraced the multi-directional form of communication that is more open, participatory and does away with some obstacles to effective communication. This form of communication has been touted as one that passes information in a two-way manner-known to be so effective in public institutional communications. Although Governments have for the longest time relied on traditional forms of communication, the era of memos, letters, telegrams are long gone and that is in a fast manner being phased out as the one is hastily moving to creating a village across the globe. This can possibly be done through mainstreaming new technology in the public sector interactions (Smith, 2010).

Shirky, (2008) notes that the former, also known as traditional media is known to advocate for a unidirectional as opposed to multi-directional communication way, where information is mostly passed to, with little or no engagement. This is slowly changing due to the uptake of new technology where there are engagements across the globe using internet and social media platforms. This has opened up dialogue where one is given an option of adding their voices, with comments, shares, and dislikes hence getting an opportunity of being part of the conversation as opposed to just being information consumers. Those public institutions got no choice over as long as they wish to remain relevant and move with the trends for this phenomenon.

Kash, (2012) argues that the use of new communication forms including social media in the public sector has recently gained momentum to the extent that public policy makers and communicators, especially those in the communications sector are forced to buy into it. Kash gives an example of the federal level, where an administration in charge of general services at one time engaged a recognised technology guru to escalate its presence in the global arena, which included coordinating communications within its ranks through YouTube and twitter as a way of providing a platform to challenge the activities of the institution. It was viewed as a strategic method of encouraging openness, transparency and escalation of citizen participation through holding open interactive sessions, something that could only be possibly done through social platforms.

1.3 Problem Statement

Poole, M. S., Seibold, (1998) advocates for a seamless communication flow among government institutions citing it as a very crucial strategy for a nation and its institutions in terms of

economic and political growth. Seibold observes that in some instances, if communication between the citizens and the governments not aided, there is a possibility of unrest that might result to political instability and economical breakdown or slow implementation of projects. Most of the Public institutions in Kenya use the traditional media. The newspapers and internal memos are still embraced as the most utilised models of communication in government circles.

With public institutions in Kenya which are not so open to e-gov (<http://www.ict.go.ke>) there is lack of a crucial aspect of engaging the citizens especially on matters that touch on their welfare and in formulating policies and acts even though the government yields the final say in the undertaking of any state.. There ought to be a specific tool to facilitate discussion among the staff even before reaching the external publics in order to enhance internal capacity. The rise of technological and social platforms has hastened and affected communication across organisations in equal measure as observed by Gartner (2009). It has particularly made it challenging to the public relation officers and other communication practitioners to be fully accountable and control the information released in the platforms under their jurisdiction.

This study therefore sought to research and based on results determine how far the public sector is keeping pace with this ever-growing phenomenon and optimising on the impact of the same to ensure the important role of the PROs is not curtailed. The material interrogated was found to fall short, especially on placing this new phenomenon at the center of government operations in matters communication to the internal and external publics.

The study also sought to have an in-depth analysis of the practice of communications and how the same has been enhanced or affected by the advent of technologies and platforms like Facebook and twitter in the Ministry in charge of East African regional affairs in Kenya. It also came up with recommendations to a review and alignment of their social media communication policies to guide and optimise on utilizing the available and emerging platforms.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the practice of government public relations in the era of social media at the Ministry of East African Community in Kenya.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

- a) To determine the level of use of social media for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community
- b) To examine the social media platforms most preferred by employees for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community
- c) To explore the communication factors that affect preference of social media platforms for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community
- d) To investigate the social media policy guiding internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community.

1.5 Research Questions

- a) What is the level of use of social media for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community?
- b) Which social media platforms are most preferred by employees for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community?
- c) What communication factors affect preference of social media platforms for internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community?
- d) Which social media policy guides internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community?

1.6 Rationale of the study

This study examined in detail how public relation and communication officers utilise new media platforms in their day-to-day activities, about the internal communications, within East African affairs coordinating ministry. The resultant effect would be to recommend workable mechanisms based on information collected. The study majorly relied on available material in analytical manner to establish how public relations practice is responding to new advanced technology through social platforms. It also recommended possible strategies and practices to ensure the public sector is not left behind in this fast-global technological era.

This research intended to explore and give a guide on where exactly the new forms of communication trends are placed especially in the public institutional communications practice. The findings would therefore give a guide on the way forward in regards to mainstreaming the

same trend with the “usual”, or the traditional communication channels, make government operations more transparent, and open, which in turn enhances democracy.

The study was a major step forward in full utilization of the said platforms by those entrusted with communications in public sector and maximize on the vastness of the same in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in their professional practice. The findings of the study were useful in helping the key departments in not only appreciating and embracing emerging trends but also the relevant communication experts sanction also ensuring the information before releasing to the public. Finally, it was expected that the research findings would boost the existing knowledge base with respect to efforts already employed by other researchers relating to the subject under investigation.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study findings on mainstreaming social media in the practice of Public Relations in Government is a major step forward in objectively developing practical policies that works towards improving the use and efficiency and effectiveness of social media platforms. This has been established, through this research that it promotes public participation which enhances accountability and democracy in the running of public affairs. The findings confirm that the low uptake of these communication channels is mostly informed by attitudes hence the need to have capacity building programs which can demystify these unfounded attitudes

The findings of this study will be useful to public relations practitioners and the policy makers in the realization and appreciation of the central role social media play in the present. It gives an empirical basis to present to the Top Management the need to revise their communications strategies and factor the issues established from this study to improve efficiency and have a more dialogic form of communication.

This study also tried to fill the gaps in understanding the reality on social media use in the governments sectors by identifying the most preferred media and the interest behind the same.

By doing so, the findings could inform interventions aimed at improving internal communication within the Ministry and be applied in other public institutions.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study examined the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in regards to the operations of the ministry charged with this mandate in Kenya. It was limited to the Ministry of East African Community Headquarters in Nairobi City with special assessment of the social media communication channels currently used for internal communications. This involved collecting information about the channels used and the rate of use as well as the factors determining social media preferences. In addition, the researcher collected information on the social media policy guiding internal communication.

One of the limitations is that there was suspicion that usually is associated with any kind of a research which was mitigated by assuring the respondents of utmost confidentiality with a disclosure that this was purely intended to carry out a mission on getting information on how well communication could be done, and the same was for scholarly work. The other situation that challenged the researcher was the absence of some key individuals whose contributions would have been key to this expedition; this was countered by giving the study tool to the assistant of such individuals, assumed to give information from the same script. The researcher had also obtained official clearance from the School, which was attached to each questionnaire; this boosted the confidence of the respondents and therefore believed to have motivated them to give unbiased information. The study focused on available literature on emerging communication trends where primary data was collected using questionnaires.

1.9 Operational definition of terms

Communication Strategy - Formal blueprints for how information will be exchanged, informs the communication policy of the organisation, West, R., & Turner, L. H. (2000).

Practitioners - Griffin, E. (1997) defines this as persons actively engaged in an art, discipline, or profession, especially in an organisation. In the case of this study- Public Relations Officers

Public Relations – Maintenance of a conducive and likeable image professionally done to an organisation or an institution. Anttiroiko, A. (2004)

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter discussed the existing literature about the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in the public sector. The chapter also presents the general literature, empirical information, the research gaps, theoretical framework and the conceptual framework. The theories provided a basis to make sense with how it directly or indirectly affected how communication was conducted in the government setting. The chapter is thus structured into theoretical, empirical and conceptual sections.

2.2 Transition from traditional to new media

2.2.1 Traditional communication

According to Kingsley (2011), governments are known to make use of the “formal” forms of communication to share vital information to the public. This has however been overtaken by the rise of new forms of communications where the government can share information directly to the citizens; a fast, reliable and cost-effective form of passing information and doesn't have to pass through so many gatekeepers; in charge of editing and reporting, whose decisions are not always right and might lose very important part of the information they send. Moreover, with the low newspaper and editorial audience, the level of production in terms of quality has drastically declined which has forced the responsible personnel to go for alternative outlet to get to the intended stakeholders. The culture of governments' overreliance on traditional forms of communication are now gone which has rendered officers in charge very little control of what is said or discussed about their organisations. The communications landscape has significantly moved and the dynamics changed so fast that the responsible individuals must adjust to fit in the era

2.2.2 New Media communication

A study by Bonson, Torres, Royo and Flores (2012) that looked at use of internet in running of public institutions in the European nations established the present acknowledgement by governments on the great platforms and chances the new technology has provided in terms of very vast reachership and at relatively decreased costs. In addition, they believed that utilizing new media platforms is crucial for it enhances transparency though the same social media as a public participation tool has not been fully utilised.

A social media study by Wright and Hinson (2010) established that most public relations professionals believe social media tools were beneficial to their work and duties. A greater number, 70% of those contacted appraised new media like use of Facebook and LinkedIn as being crucial, 65% talked of bloggers' platforms, which have become so popular, and 65% had a soft spot for channels, which had visual images like YouTube. The research found out that practitioners of government public relations largely viewed technology as a vital form of running affairs at a relatively lower cost with a wider reach and timely responses which ought to be adopted.

Avery (2010) hold that public relations practitioners in what he referred to as "companies in the fortune age" believes the social media technology draws one's keenness and thought on the particular subject. They argue that the use of network channels to enhance its operations and activities helps open up dialogue with the focused audience and the public despite the challenges associated with the same, which can easily be addressed. The study established that a deliberate context for creating dialogic relationships with publics through the Internet was provided by Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) more than a decade ago where dialogue was defined as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions".

2.2.3 Participatory approach

This view is associated with the current on the vital duty played by communication in all undertaking, where relationships between any institution and her stakeholders are enhanced by communication through public relations experts (Ledingham, 2003). The current generation is so informed and curious to dig into information, most through internet sources. This makes it so vital for individuals in charge of communication to train themselves on the current

communication trends-including but not limited to social media .It gives the masses an opportunity to send their feedbacks online; an aspect that encourages openness and accountability (Azyan, 2012); the aforementioned profits and benefits and expectations can also be replicated in the private sector and Non-Governmental organisations hence must be incorporated in all government communication strategies.

A research on communications I the public sector and the crucial role carried out by the public relations unit by Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton, & Sweetster, (2010) revealed that social media platforms have been embraced and recognised as very fast way of passing information and a phenomenon that has received very fast embrace due to its dynamic nature of passing information to attain the objectives of the organisation. The same research established that one American Red Cross had embraced the use of social media and viewed it as a very successful way of passing very urgent information especially in an event of an accident or fire outbreaks. It also indicated that the organisation used technological platforms to form relationships focused on the young people whom they felt formed a very crucial base of their clientele. It however established that in the same environment, on a similar research carried out focusing on the health sector, there was reluctance to adopt new media and, in the areas, where it had been embraced, there were significant rates of use especially based on their area of coverage. Those living around the cities used social media more than their counterparts in the rural areas-where most of the Red Cross activities contracted, hence slowing the use of the same.

2.2.4 E-government Operations

The advent and rise of technology as a communication tool in matters of public service is no longer a new phenomenon-it has advanced and therefore become an inevitable aspect of communication. The often referred to as “e-government,” initiative include all online communications and activities by governments to governments, or governments to her citizens and partners. The e-government paradigm is the ideal communication strategy that can suit today’s communication dynamics; it advocates for citizens as partners in governance and no longer as mere consumers of information (Anttiroiko, 2004). This mode of communication is also embraced as a tool to exercise democracy (e-democracy) by openly engaging in debates and conversations through social media platforms. This has been cited as an emerging and hastily accepted concept that denotes the transformation of citizen involvement Graham and Avery –

Public Relations Journal – Vol. 7, No. 4, 2013 6 in democratic and purposeful processes (Stayaert, 2000) and can be discussed through social media networking and discussions. The classic theories of democracy distinguish among pluralist, representative, and direct theories of democracy.

Norris (2004) observes that new technologies are a key way of improving representation through giving an opportunity to the public to scrutinize and evaluate the records and performance of public officers. They are a means that provide an avenue of interactions and a direct link with those elected or appointed into public offices. Norris emphasizes his analogy as an advance of the Direct theory which proposes that democracy can only work well if there was a direct link and open participation of the citizens in public affairs e.g. in policy debate, actions, and decisions. It's a means to "overcome space and time constraints on public involvement, as well as those associated with status differentials, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and wealth" (Scott, 2006)

A study by Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) on having a collaborated approach of technology in developing communication policies and strategies established that most communicators who have worked in public sectors contents of communications policies have a different approach from those in the Non-governmental organisations and private sector. This is despite the fact that the general principles are the same for all organisations, though the specifics change based on the nature of organisations and the mandate to be executed.

Sanders (2011) observed that there are three key issues in regards to government communications: he notes the role of power, the relationship to and the role of the news media, and normative questions related to government communications purpose and performance in constitutional democracies. The study indicated that this era of increased government checks and scrutiny as well a level of general mistrust by citizens, transparency and accountability was not an option but a requirement to ensure effective government relations (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). They defined transparency is defined as the availability of information on matters of public concern, the ability of citizens to participate in political decision-making, and the accountability of government to public opinion (Cotterrell, 1999).

2.3. Emerging social media platforms in the public sector

In a study carried out by Kent, (1998) on mygov, a digital service for enhancing online accessibility by the public, technology was found out to have become a very fast and crucial segment of the same. It was lauded to increase the audience reach, and also the versatility of the channels which ensured different stakeholder were almost concurrently hence saving on time and costs. He noted a very rapid growth in the same where more than two million running government associated accounts which was viewed as a facilitation to the citizenly in terms of running virtual errands even in areas of Health. There was a record over hundred thousand active users of social media on daily basis making government related service enquiries which underscored the utilization of this crucial aspect of communication in the global era.

In a study carried on settlement services by Sanders (2011), he notes that online government services facilitated uses to utilise a one-off information system-where a click of a mouse provided all the necessary information they needed. The service was also key in enabling citizens to upgrade some personal information like change of name, their physical addresses and how they could easily be reached which would be replicated on the other end of the executing authority. The study pegs its credential on the level of information guarding, where only authorized individuals were allowed to verify the information uploaded by the users hence guaranteed security of information. The government would only use the information since the data is coded and only intelligence systems could decode the information.

Wigley (2011) observes the use of these platforms as a very crucial tool especially in the local and international arena; they are appreciated as 'the most widely accepted phenomenon which no one can live without. In his study carried out on the several other organisations with a common objective, Wigley appreciated a very significant number of offices utilizing the same where a majority of the respondents, especially those working for those working in the state houses admitted having utilised Twitter while half of the whole team indicated they were on facebook, but surprisingly a very negligible number of these organisations had an idea of enhancing or establishing a guide to the utilization of their social media through a well outlined policy guide even where the government reached the community directly through these social media platforms.

2.3.1 e-government

According to Glaisyer, (2010), technology has become the selling point for any organisation willing to fit in the global sphere in its undertakings, and, to that end, must be viewed as a very crucial utility especially in the running of public relations in Government institutions. Employing social media tools is poised to improve on the interactivity across governments, a government with her citizens, and having the ability to touch wider scope of the population-something not so easy to be done through the old traditional channels. It must be appreciated that this phenomenon is a leeway for public officers in public institutions to establish rapports with policy influencers who can support in the uptake of government programs to the community/society.

The years that lie ahead can only be technology based, owing to the evolving technologies and hence calls for concerted efforts to ensure the same is utilised to enhance public service accountability and transparency especially on matters public relations. These emerging technologies have the potential to change how government communicates within and among others. There are great innovations and technologies that have been proven to improve efficiency and information sharing as observed by Willis, 1999, where he acknowledges full utilization of these emerging phenomena, though he indicates it still has not been fully mainstreamed in the running of public affairs.

2.3.2 Machine Intelligence (MI)

According to Dixon, (2010) this is a process where machines can be commanded to perform such tasks as to analyses the brains after getting the meaning of what has been fed in the system. Dixon argues that this phenomenon has grown exponentially and has been viewed as a very crucial platform to open up public participation, using technology to reduce workloads while upscaling the industrious aspect of any assignment.

2.3.3. Open, Virtual and Cloud-based Architecture

According to (Willis, 1999), this is a system largely used by pioneering companies and organisations which rely heavily on the new advanced technologies as a way of innovations. It is largely viewed as a promising trajectory for public institutions in their prospective undertakings with a foreseeable efficacy, minimal charges, and promoting results through seamless operations and collaborated systems, openness and integrative approaches.

2.3.4. Virtual and Augmented Reality

Wright, (2010) argues that virtual and augmented reality technology has in the recent past seen a very positive uptake in the running of public institutions to make work more efficient and open up processes for the public to ventilate. Wright observes that similar analogies have been largely utilised by the discipline fellows in maintaining law and order as well as by very established international institutions. He indicates that the adopted platforms through this technology has been proven to give results especially where an issue is specific and requires a particular step. It is appreciated to integrate services across all ranks in the security sector through improved communication channels believed to reorganise public sector engagements.

2.4 Research gaps

According to Marchel & Owens (2007) generative and adoptive values in any public setting requires a long process especially in regards to innovations, ideas or strategies. This is informed by most unforeseen challenges and possible pitfalls which sometimes might pose a huge challenge and failure, therefore clear understanding and appreciation of social media usage by governments, in terms of the opportunities to address the challenges of increasing organisational efficiency and improving citizen engagement is important. These issues are especially important and pressing for many local government organisations.

A study by Mahajan-Cusack (2016) indicates that available literature on issues regarding management of public sector in the U.S gave an evidence on how citizens lacked confident and almost resulted to antipathy for which they regarded as secluded policy formulation and implementation, which affected service delivery. They argued that there was lack of public participation hence the government was regarded to be implementing “own programs” which eroded public trust. The study established that most of the tools used to pass information did not open or leave any chance for dialogue and opinions hence denied very crucial stakeholders an opportunity to give the influencers in the administration some valuable public information.

Similarly, public engagement through open up communication channels and dialogue gives a more understanding and gains crucial support. One of the most practical strategies to use in opening up this communication lines is by incorporating social and traditional media in the affairs of internal interest in the organisation, which translates to the public. In this regard

therefore, (Manoharan, & Bennett 2013) established that prudence in the new media could see a total shift in the forms of communication since it encourages horizontal engagements as opposed to the top-down form of communication, which seems dictatorial. It encourages a two-way communication approach, key for the progress of any organisations.

It would be imperative to note that if organisations fully mainstreamed social media in the running of government programs, then communication and operations would be seamless and more coherent. This however requires that the public be sensitised on the responsible utilization of these media, which guarantees more efficiency and effectiveness. (Yang & Holzer 2006). Though gave a well versed documented evidence of how government institutions are successfully implementing social media strategies with very little documentation on how to identify the risks and challenges involved and how these can be overcome, obviously as expected with emerging trends.

In order to identify examples of best practice while understanding the benefits and risks of using social media in local government, the study also explored wider experiences of social media use among this sample; including the factors driving the organisation's motivation to use social media, forms of social media management across the organisation, the selection of social media tools, the use of formal and informal policies and guidelines on social media usage and the ways in which the impacts of social media are monitored and measured.

As the use utilization of the new media keeps growing, it then calls for governments to evaluate their communication tools with a determination of the value the same added to their targeted audience. The general and empirical material reviewed for this subject indicates a lot has been researched on technology. However, this has been carried out in first world economies and little has been done in developing countries. In pursuit to keep pace with the global technological trends, there is dire need to thoroughly check on the current and emerging trends of technology, concerning the developing countries. More so, the study established the preparedness in terms of having a social media policy for those directly involved in the dissemination of information to the public, specifically in Kenyan public institutions; Ministry of EAC.

The results were useful to both researchers and practitioners by providing empirical evidence of how the ministry of EAC operates internally. The results will also help media operators

understand how their channels are used by citizens with a view of not only publishing information rather than as a space for citizen participation.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The research was grounded on a single theory and one model that assisted the researcher in laying the foundation for the findings and recommendations of the study. These are Technology Acceptance Model and Social Cognitive Theory. The Technology Acceptance Model sought to examine how users come to accept and use a technology whereas the Social learning theory was fundamental at the social context of either fortifying or enhancing use of technology in the government systems.

2.5.1 Technology Acceptance Model

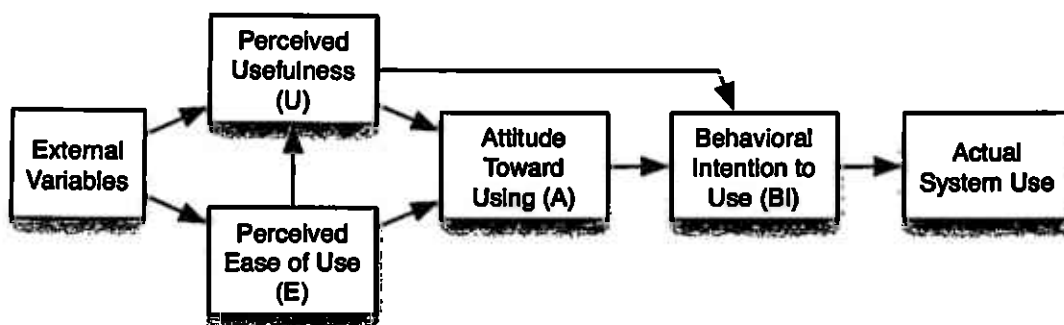
Davis (1989) the proponent for TAM observes this as a form to encourage or push those that want to use models on accepting the utilization of new technology. It indicates that any new or upcoming innovation needs the good will of those who influence its adoption and use. It opines that some influencers on consider whether, the modalities and appropriate times for use, determine a new phenomenon adoption. Chuttur observes that the wide acceptance of TAM is embedded on the practicability and usability of the phenomenon. He lauds it as a model that encourages those in the policymaking table to buy and influence those operating under them. Researchers further argue that having to utilise technologies in public organisations must first work to utilise the model and have the users adopt its use. This is the most crucial thing to ensure that technology is not underused or completely abandoned, so researchers have argued policy makers to ensure that this model is properly incorporates in their operations.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as proposed by Davis, 1989 is premised to be the most used technological and information model in matters of adoption. According to this framework, TAM has been used in predicting the acceptance and utilization of several innovations in different fields of practice. The study then argues how TAM can be adopted in the development and utilization of the most recent technological innovation emerging trends in technology, including social media in communication in the government setting.

According to Makau (1988), TAM was formulated as a demonstration of developing acceptance, appreciation, and utilization of technology. The premise in which this theory derives its basis is that when the intended consumers are presented with a new phenomenon, with technological

bearing three factors influence their speed of adoption and use. These are the perceptions of how useful it is, how easy the same can be used and the attitudes of the consumer in the usefulness of the tool. According to the first factor bases its strength on how the user feels will be aided by the technology, while the second the level they feel it will free them which in turn would positively or negatively affect their feelings and attitudes. The interlinkages are as demonstrated by the model in figure 2.1 by Davis (1989).

Figure 2.1: Technology Acceptance Model



The Technology Acceptance Model has been applied in various information technology and information system areas. According to Kurnia S (2005), TAM is an acceptable model which has been employed in many information technology and information system areas such as e-learning, World-Wide-Web, online auctions, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), e-portfolio systems, wireless LAN, E-government, Ecommerce, internet banking, and mobile learning.

Kurnia appreciates TAM as a model that informs technology designers on the impact of the system to the user's behavior. He supports that TAM has been adopted and tested as a useful framework in the field of information science and Learning Management Systems and provided statistically reliable results. This theory therefore remains crucial in this study since it will give a basis on the determinants of the level and rate of use of technology through social media platforms. It guided in identifying perceptions on its ease of use and attitudes towards usefulness of the same.

2.5.2 The Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura (1969) argues that learning occurs within a social context and holds that individuals within a social system learn from each other by observing the behaviour of the other person. The behaviours of others within the social system make them grow parallel actions. After observing the behaviour of others, people assimilate and imitate that behaviour, especially if their observational experiences are positive ones or include rewards related to the observed behaviour. According to Bandura, imitation involves the actual reproduction of observed activities (Bandura 1977)

The fundamental concepts that Bandura holds imperative in learning behaviour are paying attention, retention, reproduction and motivation to perform that behaviour. The social learning theory borrows heavily from the audience research theory of Uses and Gratifications, which looks at the needs of an audience and the delight they develop once the need is satisfied. Social learning therefore is a critical aspect of the uses and gratification theory as it falls on social uses of media in terms of social relations. It is critical how fast and greatly people are getting into new platforms, just because somebody else within the social setting is using the same. This study explores the concepts behind this theory applicable to the subject of the research.

Bandura (1977) observes that one is required to pay attention for them to learn and get the concept. If one wishes to learn from the behaviour of the model (the person that demonstrates the behaviour), then there must be elimination of anything that catches one's attention other than the sources. In addition, the more interesting the model is, the more likely one is to pay full attention to him and learn. Technological advancement is so dynamic and ever changing that those in the systems must be willing and ready to learn from those advanced in the same. The learning must be consistent due to the ever-changing social media trends.

After attentively absorbing information, a learner is required to retain and consistently practice the newly learned behaviour. Without it, learning of the behaviour would not be established, and one might need to get back to observing the model again for having not kept the information. Technological advancement being a very innovation related idea calls for the players to retain information, which can only be improved by learning more.

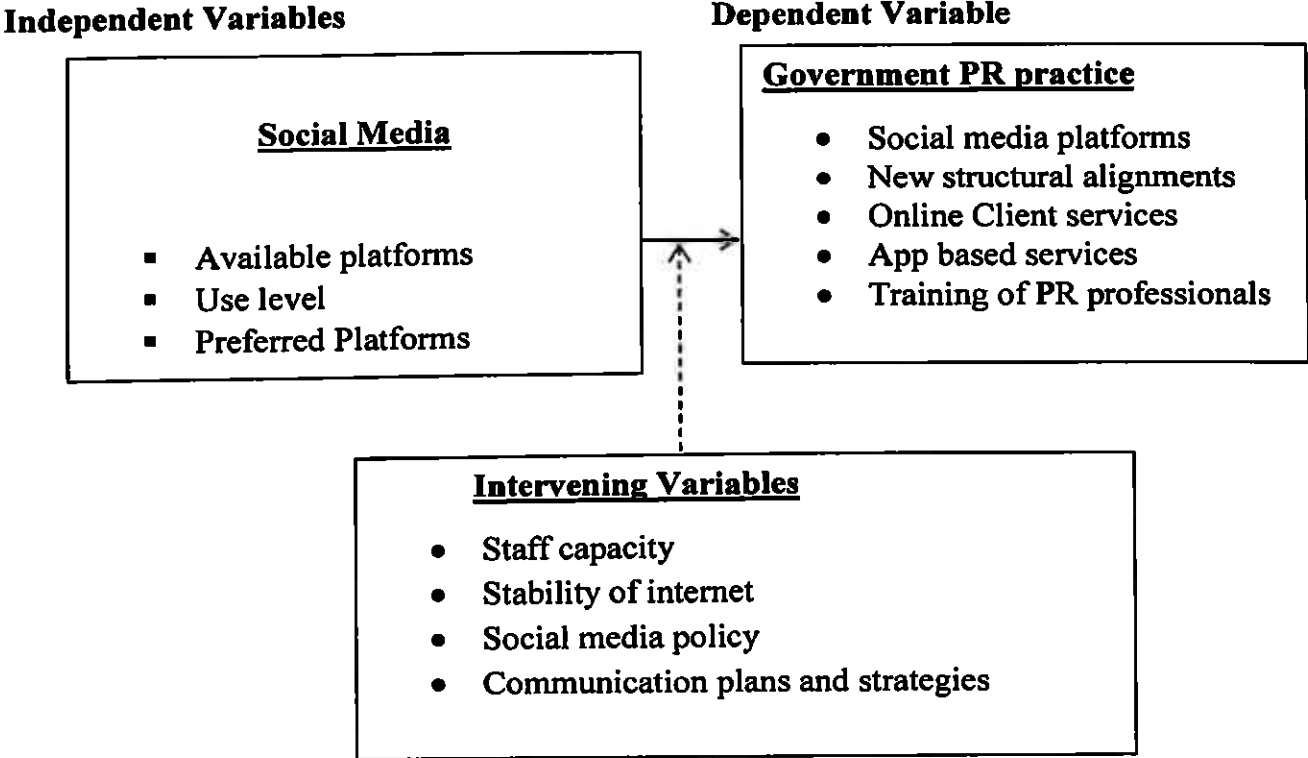
When one is successful in receiving and maintaining a pace, of retaining relevant information, one is required to demonstrate the behaviour and attained skill through reproduction. In this phase, practice of the behaviour by repeatedly doing it is important for improvement. A technological skill, just learned can never stick for long. Reproduction will lead to learning a new thing each moment.

Bandura contents that for one to feel motivated to repeat the behaviour is what one needs in order to keep on performing it. This is where reinforcement and punishment (sometimes by the systems) comes in. To ensure that the systems do not become punitive for inadequate skill, public officers must repeatedly practice and familiarise themselves with the emerging technological trends.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

As this study investigates the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in the Ministry of East African Community, it also took into account other intervening variables that could have affected the subject of study in question. Figure 2.1 shows the relationships among the variables of the study.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework



From the figure, available social media platforms, social media use level and preferred platforms are the independent variables that are examined in relation to the government PR practice in the social media era. From the figure, it is also noted that other factors that are likely to influence government public relations practice, such as staff capacity, internet stability, social media policy and established communication or overall institutional strategy are indicated as intervening variables. However, not expressly the focus of this study, these factors ordinarily do affect PR practice, as shown by other empirical studies reviewed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This section presents the research methods and materials used in the study. It contains the research design, study location, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection methods and instruments, tests for validity and reliability of instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation techniques and ethical considerations in the research.

3.2 Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive research design. According to Jackson (2009) this design involves obtaining data on the current status of a trend with a view of describing what is in existence in relation to the prevailing circumstances. This design was fundamental in this study since it will appraise the considerations of the findings and give an in-depth and inclusive investigation of the findings necessary for this research. It involved in-depth scrutiny and assessment of the future of public relations practice in the era of global technological advancement in the Ministry of East African Community.

3.3 Research Approach

This study utilised pragmatism, which according to (Scott and Briggs, 2009) forms the central application of mixed methods in the formulation of research questions that can be answered by integrating the results of quantitative and qualitative research. The nature of this study, utilizing the exploratory underpinnings of shared beliefs among members of a the public relations profession dictates that questions that address a shared belief on an idea or technology be appropriated formulated.

This research was primarily concerned with establishing the issues surrounding the use and utilization of new media, also called social media as a form of communication in the public Sector. The researcher had no intention of using the results of this study to pursue abstract knowledge but as a way of enhancing the same through specified research goals. There were no

assertions made prior this study and therefore the researcher's interest were to explore the subject of study

3.4 Research Method

This study adopted a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data (Desanctis, 1994). The mixed-methods approach was significant in finding answers to the research questions and objectives. The data collected by the semi-structured questionnaires and key-informant interview guides was quantitative and qualitative in nature, respectively. Use of mixed method approach was considered to ensure reliability and depth to the research data hence minimizing disintegration of explanatory models of communication. It was also believed that employing both quantitative and qualitative research in the study would extort the strengths and moderate the weaknesses in the two approaches.

3.4 Research Site

The study was carried out in the Ministry of East African Community offices depending on the workstations of the participants who had been selected. The Ministry of East African Community headquarters is located the Cooperative Bank House along Haile Sellasie Avenue. It is on a commercial building, the 16th to 19th floor, next to the Bomblast Memorial Park. The study took place in the entire Ministry of East African establishments located in various regions in the country.

3.5 Target Population

According to Kombo and Tromp (2011), a population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. The target population for this study was 200 employees, comprising of four stratified group of 75 senior staff, 25 staff from LVBC, 75 staff from EAC organs and 25 staff from the Editorial Board. The table below shows the sample frame. According to Borg and Gall (2003), researchers are encouraged to select between 30-40 percent when the target population is in hundreds. In this study, the research selected 40 percent from each of the four groups of the employees of Ministry of East African Community. The study targeted all the 200 employees of the Ministry

Table 3.1: Target Population

Level	Population	Percentage	Sample size
Senior staff of EAC	75	40%	30
LVBC Staff	25	40%	10
Staff of EAC organs	75	40%	30
Editorial Board Members	25	40%	10
Total	200		80

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study or a fraction of the whole, selected in the research project (Grunig, & Jaatinen, 1999). This study used systematic random sampling to select the study participants for the survey method. The sample for the survey was 80 participants selected from a register supplied by the Human Resource Department at the Ministry of East African Community.

Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select three (3) participants for interviews: the Head of Public Relations, the Director Administration and the Integration Secretary.

Using systematic random sampling, the 80 participants was selected from the four registers representing the groups, where the first name in each list was selected, and the sub-sequent participant picked after every two (2) names based on class interval of two (2). The selected participants were then traced to their workstations using their contacts available in the HR register. They were then issued with semi-structured questionnaires. Table 3.2 presents the sample.

Table 3.2 Sample Frame

Category	Frequency	Percentage of Target Population
Senior staff of EAC	30	37.5%
LVBC Staff	10	12.5%
Staff of EAC Organs	30	37.5 %
Editorial Board Members	10	12.5%
Total	80	100%

3.7 Data Collection Technique

Lenhart, (2009) observes that the choice of data collection methods is dependent on the aspects of the subjects, topic and question under study, objectives, design, expected data and results. Gillen (2008) argues that sources of data used for research have either primary or secondary data. In this study, the researcher used primary data informed by Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) assertion that primary data is more reliable and up to date since the researcher collects data from the original source giving no chances of either manipulation or distortion.

The data collection methods included survey and interview methods. Survey method was used to collect quantitative data from 80 participants drawn from the four strata of Ministry of East African Community employees. The qualitative data was also collected using in-depth interview method from Director of Administration, Head of Public Relations Department and the Secretary of Integration who were also part of the 80 participants in the quantitative study.

3.7.1 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires were used collect qualitative and quantitative data, respectively.

3.7.1.1 Interview

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation and usually is structured. It uses a set of questions for data collection. According to Kvale (1996), in-depth interview is an instrument with closed or open-ended questions, or statements to which respondents must respond. The interview pays close concentration to a given experience of the respondent and the lessons drawn. This method also gives the interviewer autonomy to decide the manner and sequence of the questions to be fielded and the freedom to explore responses. In this study, three in-depth interviews were conducted for the three participants.

3.7.1.2 Questionnaires

The study utilised semi-structured questionnaires which are considered to be definite, concrete and with pre-determined questions. Similar set of questions were administered with exactly the

same wording and following the same sequence to all the 80 participants. The questionnaires administered contained both closed and open-ended questions.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

According to Kothari (2004) validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to appraise under a study. In this study, piloting of the in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires was conducted with two participants from a different ministry before the actual data collection. This tested the validity and reliability of the research instruments intended for use. It also aided in identifying aspects in the tools that are vague to the respondents with a view of either clarifying, changing for optimal reliability and validity

Reliability is defined as the measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent and coefficient results on data in another given similar situation. Reliability of the instruments was done to ensure that there is consistency across all given variables as observed by (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Internal consistency from the administered pilot two participants determined the reliability of the data collection tools.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation Techniques

After collecting data, the filled questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. It was then processed and analysed. Kothari (2004) indicates that data processing implies editing, coding, classification and tabulation of collected data so that they are agreeable to analysis. Quantitative data was coded and entered into Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS Version 21) and analysed using inferential and descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis based on the content of the responses where those with similar themes or patterns were clustered collectively into rational categories.

Descriptive statistics involved use of absolute and relative tendencies in percentages, mean and standard deviation (measures of central tendency and dispersion). Quantitative data was presented in tables with an account of the same presented in prose. Qualitative data was processed in narrative or quotations format.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that all the participants in the study remained anonymous and all the information gathered from each one of them treated with utmost confidentiality. The significance of the study was also clearly explained to the participants. The researcher also sought official

authority to be cleared to proceed for fieldwork after being certified by the Board of examiners and issued with a certificate of fieldwork (Appendix V), Certificate of Originality (Annex VI) and Certificate of Corrections (Appendix VII). These certificates were presented where and when needed for accreditation. No respondent was influenced or coerced to participate in the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This chapter analyses, presents and interprets the research results. In this chapter, the results have been presented based on research objectives as the guiding themes, where the questions in the survey tool have formed the sub-themes. The data were gathered with the help of survey questionnaires and interview guides. The questionnaires were designed in line with the specific objectives of the study. Therefore, the format of data presentation was largely guided by sections in the questionnaires as sections and the actual questions in the tool as subsections. The qualitative data generated through personal open-ended interview were principally used to triangulate the survey data as well as to fill the gaps left by the survey data.

4.1.1 Response Rate

Response rate is the actual number of respondents who actually answered the survey questions and returned the completed research tools, in relation to the number of respondents sampled for the study. Expressed as a percentage, it is an important indicator of the survey quality and level of significance of results. In this study, the general response rate was 70 respondents out of the 80 participants who were targeted by the survey part of study. This represents a response rate of 87.5%, which was considered sufficient enough to generalise the results. For the qualitative part of the research, the researcher managed 100% response rate since all participants were reached.

4.2: Demographic profiles of respondents

The study sought to map the demographic profiles of the respondents in order to ascertain whether the data were collected from the actual participants who represented the dynamic profiles of the target population. This was also important in demonstrating the relationship between the demographic profiles and access and use of social media platforms for internal communication in the Ministry of East African Community in Kenya. The findings have been presented in the sub-sections that follow.

4.2.1: Gender profile of respondents

The study mapped the gender profiles of the respondents and the results indicate that 44 of the respondents were women while 26 of the respondents were men. Women therefore were 62.9% while 37.1 % were men. The finding shows that there were more female studied than the male counterparts in the Ministry of East African Community. This finding appears to contradict the long-held belief that there are always more male than female employees in the public service employment in Kenya. Although the finding shows this, it was too early to conclude this point as it could just have been possible for the study to coincidentally reach this number of female employees by default when their actual numbers could be lower than shown in the sample. The most plausible explanation could be the fact that the gender mainstreaming campaigns launched over the last two decades, especially in the public sector, have been partly responsible for the higher number of female employees than the male population in such contexts. Table 4.1 presents the gender profiles of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender of the respondents

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Frequency	26	44	70
Percentage	37.1	62.9	100

The study found out that there was a tendency to have more women than their male counterparts in every section of the Ministry, and this was confirmed during an interview with one of the administrators who indicated that the ministry prided itself in the whole country as one of those with clear gender equality policy mainstreamed. He observed that the Ministry had put up efforts to have gender representation almost equivalent to two-thirds principle still problematic in many departments in the government. While investigating this, another view emerged which associated the finding with the notion that the disparity was due to the differential levels of involvement

with social media among the male and female populations. This suggested that more women were found to be in social media than men who are believed to engage in social media for business reasons in most cases. The study, however, did not probe this further. According to an interviewee, women are proven as more vocal, expressive and willing to share information through social media and biologically prewired for social networking. According to this notion, the men showed little or no concern with the questions asked with most of them showing very little interest on matters social media.

4.2.2: Age profiles of the respondents

The study investigated the age distribution of the respondents using the predetermined categories of 0-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 years. This was important in determining the representativeness of the age profiles in the Ministry of East African community. It was also important in showing how age profiles related with adoption and use of social media platforms as a means of internal communication in the ministry. Table 4.2 presents the results.

Table 4.2 Ages of the Respondents

Age (Years)	30 and Below	31-40	41-50	51-60	Total
Frequency	06	32	26	06	70
Percentage	8.6	45.7	37.1	8.6	100

From Table 4.2 the employees between 0-30 years were represented by 8.6 percent, while those of age groups 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 were represented by 41.7%, 37.1% and 8.6%, respectively. This finding implies that the majority of employees in the public service are essentially middle age groups. The relatively younger and older members of the population were represented by the fewest population, which agrees with most population statistics indicating the workforce as made up of middle age people. The younger population is believed to be in schools or colleges either

for work related training, while the older populations are retired or in private practice. This finding shows that the public service in Kenya has not opened up to more youth to join the public service despite the fact that the youth are the majority in the country. The study did not pursue this further than indicating the age distribution for the sake of the study. It was important to note that an administrator associated social media adoption and use with the youthful population (Bobson, et al 2012), and the fact that there were fewer youth in this ministry was almost an important reason for the low rate of adoption and use of social media for internal or organisational communication.

4.2.3: Education profiles of respondents

The study sought to find out the distribution of the respondents depending on their levels of education. This was meant to determine the representativeness of sample as well as demonstrate the relationship between this variable with the rate of adoption and use of social media for internal communication. Over the last few years, many studies in technology, management and social behavior change have hinted at a relationship between education level of an employee or a person with the rate of change (Vigley & Zhang 2011; Mangro 2012). Most of these studies have found a positive correlation between education level, exposure, professional practice and level of technology transfer with adoption and use of innovations. The present study focused on investigating the factors that affect preference of social media for internal communication, and deemed it necessary to check this link. Table 4.3 presents the results.

Table 4.3: Education level of the respondents

Level	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	Total
Frequency	02	14	54	70
Percentage	2.9	20	77.1	100

The study established that majority of employees in the ministry had post-secondary education level, represented by 77.1%. Those who had attained secondary level education were 20% while those with primary education were a paltry 2.9%. This shows that a typical government department represents a general population in terms of its educational attainment. The implication of this is that in a typical society, there are non-schoolers, basic education and higher education graduates found in any contexts of the society (KNBS 2009).

In the study, the respondents with primary level education were in the subordinate level job description, while those with post-secondary level education were placed at the key departments of the ministry to run operations, processes and supervise the work of their colleagues. An administrator had this to say, *“We have to bring everyone on board because each person has his or her duties specified by terms of employment, and you know even those with CPE are also here with us”*. The level of social media use in the Ministry of East African Community for internal communication was established through the variable of education, where it was noted that those with post-secondary education were more responsive towards technology adoption and use compared with much older and non-schooler employees in the ministry. The extent of this association was only descriptively investigated, with no in-depth analysis to give a clearer picture of relationship.

4.3: Level of social media use in the Ministry of East African Community

The first objective of this study was to determine the level of use of social media among staff of the Ministry of East African Community (EAC) in Kenya. The ultimate goal of this was to understand the extent to which social media has been embraced as a means of internal or organisational communication. The understanding of this was important to gauge the depth of access and use of new media technology platforms in communication with staff for social or

professional functions. In this section, seven questions were used, such as on how much the different categories of staff embraced social media platforms as a means of internal communication, the period they had worked with the ministry, the level of their job design, ownership of personal social media accounts and the frequency with which they used the social media platforms to communicate amongst themselves or with people outside of their work environment. It was important to understand these because they had a bearing on the extent of uptake and use of the new media platforms. The following sub-sections present results in detail.

4.3.1: Length of service at the Ministry of EAC

The length of service of an employee in a place of work may determine how they do the current work assigned to them. The length of experience may determine adoption of an innovation or reluctance to adopt a change. In this case, therefore, period of experience may positively or negatively affect the communication channels, especially the use of social media. When the respondents were asked about the length of time they have worked at the Ministry of East African Community, 50% of them said they had worked for a period of 3-6 years, with the rest falling under three years and over six-year period in the predetermined categories of period given to them as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Period they have worked in the Ministry

Years	Below 1	1-3	3-6	More than 6	Total
Frequency	05	15	35	15	70
Percentage	7.2	21.4	50	21.4	100

From the table, those who had worked for less than one year were 7.2%, between 1-3 years were 21.4%, and between 3-6 years were 50% and those who had worked for more than six years were represented by 21.4%. This implies that the employees who had worked between 3-6 years were

the majority in the ministry, followed by those who had worked between 1-3 years and more than 6 years in that order. It is important to note that all the employees sampled had worked in the Ministry during the period of social media advancement, and were expected to understand the usage of these platforms for internal communication.

In an interview with an administrator from the Communications Department, it was revealed that most of the employees were living in the times of new media development and quite understood them, but the problem with adoption and use were matters of attitudes and beliefs that were quite difficult to deal with. He observed, “*Looking at the demographics in our ministry, it beats logic that majority of us, me included, still find it hard to adopt social media yet we all belong to that generation*”. The implication of this is that length of service in the ministry did not directly affect the adoption and use of new media platforms, but the attitudes that people have against it (Curtis 2010; Azyan 2012), summarised as, “*we still want to have our organisational communication to be through a ‘formal’ means*”, as quipped by one of the administrators interviewed.

4.3.2: Level of operation of staff at the Ministry of East African Community

The study asked about the operational levels of respondents in their work in order to determine the dynamics under which the staff serving at the ministry felt the need or the propensity of engagement with social media platforms access and use for social, internal and organisational communication. The assumption of this was that every level of work in an organisation comes with its unique demands on the staff, who must align with these if the work was to be done successfully. Table 4.5 shows the results

Table 4.5: Level of operation in the Ministry

Level	Entry	Middle	Top Management	Total
Frequency	05	40	25	70
Percentage	7.1	57.1	35.8	100

As shown by Table 4.5 middle-level staff formed the majority of the respondents with 57%, while entry-level and top-level managements were represented by 7.1% and 35.8%, respectively.

The fact that there were more middle-level staff in the ministry is an indicator of the existence of many departments within the ministry and the operational levels marched with the theoretical expectation, where an organisation, which is large enough, is expected to have more middle-level managers. It was noted that the ministry prided itself with employment of several technocrats to work in various skill areas of the establishment. Just like in many other organisations, it is expected that there are only a bunch of executives in the organisation, going by the principles of organisational management.

The finding that there were few entry-level staff in the ministry spoke to a future problem with succession in the ministry, although in the public service in developing countries, staff are often promoted from other departments, not necessarily from the same ministry. This shortfall was acknowledged by an administrator, who was optimistic that the situation would be reversed when the government embarked on its internship programme to mentor fresh graduates in to matters public service in their areas of training. He observed,

“The ministry has not hired for quite some time now due to the Public Service freezing on entry levels, but will soon get the entry level staff as we have received the government’s indication of the recruitment of internship graduates by Public Service Commission”.

The study found that most of the staff at the middle level job had more social media uptake as most of them had common WhatsApp groups where they usually shared information about their work. This was proven when one of the administrators showed the WhatsApp platforms to the researcher to verify that communication about job related engagements were ongoing in the social media platforms. It was therefore confirmed that the job category or description of a staff member could determine their involvement with the emerging media, social media included.

4.3.3: Ownership of personal social media accounts among staff members

The study sought to investigate whether the staff at the ministry owned personal social media accounts. This was the first step towards engagement with social media platforms for communication purposes. It was meant to establish the rate of access or use of social media within the Ministry of East African Community. Ownership of social media account in this study was likened to access and use of social media (Scott 2006; Sanders 2011), although this may pose a challenge when it comes to access to social media contents. It is important to note that ownership of personal social media account was deemed as the first indication of the respondent on the use of social media for social, internal or organisational communication because it is not possible to receive or initiate a social media communication without a personal social media account. Table 4.6 shows the responses of the staff regarding ownership of media technology to pass information.

Table 4.6: Ownership of personal social media accounts

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	30	40	70
Percentage	42.9	57.1	100

On whether the respondents owned personal social media accounts, 30 of them being 42.9% had social media accounts while 40 respondents being 57.1% had no social media accounts. The implication of this was that less than half of staff lacked social media accounts necessary for initiating and receiving social media communication. This means that if social media were to be a policy adopted for internal communication within the ministry, only a few staff would receive and interact with the information relayed through the social media platforms.

The assumption of this belief was that social media is a means of personalized social and organisational communication which mainly occurs within a network mediated by the technology (Bertot & Jaeger 2010), where people are connected through the technology. In certain circumstances, those with social media accounts inform their colleagues without the accounts on information being relayed, a fact which may invalidate the researcher assumption. Additionally, there are actors without accounts not in active use. For the sake of this study, involvement with social media communication was premised on the ownership of the personal accounts by the ministry staff. As one of the administrators pointed out;

“social media today has become commonplace, posing serious challenge to the mainstream (traditional) media, but sadly some of the people we expect to have their own accounts don't, but rely on accounts of spouses, friends or colleagues”.

The study also found out that most of the staff who lacked personal social media accounts were those in the categories of busy executives, older entry-level staff and some fundamentalist middle-level, who were skeptical and dismissive of social media use as disruptive.

4.3.4: Reasons for ownership of or lack of social media accounts among the staff

The study sought to find out the reasons for ownership of social media or lack of social media accounts among the staff. This was important to establish the motivations behind keeping social

media accounts. It was also important to use this information to relate such accounts with the role they play in organisational communication. As alluded to earlier, the ownership of social media accounts was thought to be the entry point into use or application of social media platform for communication. Table 4.7 shows the various reasons why staff had the social media accounts.

Table 4.7: Reasons the staff had personal social media accounts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. For leisure	15	50
II. Friends have accounts	10	33.3
III. Follow Ministry's activities	05	16.7
Total	30	100

The study predetermined the responses to guide the staff on the relevant uses of social media in the ministry. From Table 4.7, 15 respondents which is 50% of those with an account indicated they owned the same for leisure, 10 out of the 30 being 33% indicated they owned an account just because their friends had one and those that owned the account to specifically follow and engage in the Ministry's activities and events were only 5 out of the 30, being 17%. It is important to note that only a few staff had social media technology to follow work related functions in the ministry, while the rest had very different reasons although those who had them because of colleagues could be thought to have had the pressure emanating from work colleagues too. The study assumes that had the question been open-ended, the respondents could have had an opportunity to state different or related reasons for owning the personal social media accounts. As an administrator put it, social media have become unavoidable means of communication for surveillance functions. He indicated;

“Some of us who study the environment of our organisation and who carry out very sensitive tasks are forced to subscribe to these platforms to enable us know what our public think, what our colleagues in other countries are doing and to keep us generally up-to-date with everything everywhere in the region”.

Conversely, the study showed that 40 out of the 70 respondents, representing 57% who had no personal social media account gave various reason for not owning a personal social media account. 25 of them comprising 63% indicated they simply had no interest, while 10 out of the 40 being 25% indicated social media would waste their time and 5 of them being 12.5% had reservations against having a personal social media account since they felt there was nothing serious that would be discussed in such media platforms. These findings agree with the uses and gratification theory (Sanders 2011) that people have various reasons for liking or not liking certain media channels, and these are personal reasons that people put for media, as well as the gratifications or drives they get from social media adoption and use. Table 4.8 shows the reasons for not having social media accounts among some staff at the Ministry of East African Community.

Table 4.8: Reasons they don’t have personal social media accounts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. Not interested	25	62.5
II. Time wasting	10	25
III. Nothing serious is discussed	05	12.5
Total	40	100

From the table, majority of the respondents were not interested in having the social media accounts, probably because of their busy schedules or preferences towards other platforms for information. As earlier discussed, some people do not like social media due to their attitudes towards it (Bobson, et al 2012). The lifestyle of others also determines their involvement with

social media. For instance, many executives rarely have the time to go on social media, as they are more preoccupied with business return. For instance, in an interview, an administrator summarised it, thus: *“It is quite demanding to allow you to access the social media pages, and at times we get notified by our friends to see what is going on in social media”*

4.3.5: Frequency of social media use among the ministry staff

Frequency is an important measure for how well we engage with an innovation or activity. It is believed that a high frequency implies more involvement and participation, while a low frequency implies detachment. The study sought to investigate the frequency with which the staff of Ministry of East African Community with social media accounts accessed or used such account for communication. The ultimate goal of this was to determine the place occupied by social media in the realm of internal communication for work related or social functions. The assumption was that the frequency of use of social media has a bearing on the adoption or lack of adoption of social media for organisational communication. Table 4.9 presents the results.

Table 4.9: Frequency of their social media engagements of ministry staff

Level	Never	Rarely	Often	Always	Total
Frequency	05	20	30	15	70
Percentage	7.1	28.6	42.9	21.4	100

On the frequency of their engagements on social media (whether with or without personal account), 30 being 43% said they visited social media often, 20 being 28.6% indicated they rarely used social media, while 15 of them being 21% said they always visited the ministry’s social media platforms always, with only 5 out of the 70 being 7% saying they had never visited any social media platform of the Ministry. Majority of the respondents at 42.9% indicated that they often visited social media to find information about certain issues of concern to them.

Overall, around 93% of employees feel that social media is important in one way or another and could be visited to find certain information. From the results, it is informative to note that general staff had access into the ministry social media platform contents, either through personal or colleagues accounts. This implies that social media is an instrumental media for all the staff for various motives.

The results also show that social media platforms attracted external stakeholders, with who the ministry interact, and as such, it was important that the ministry keeps informed about their visitations. The administrator in charge of communication had this to say,

“Today the world has become a global village where people from various countries mean through new media, so the ministry has designated someone, digital manager, to manage the various digital platforms, including social media, especially owing to our regional mandate”.

This acknowledgement is an indicator that social media platforms have become an important media for global communication, especially in government departments in-charge of foreign or regional relations. In the Ministry of East African Community, for instance, regional integration and cooperation require constant communication flow with other governments, which are easily done through embracing new media technology, which includes largely social media.

4.3.6: Usefulness of social media in the ministry as a workplace with diverse personalities

The study sought to explore the usefulness of social media in the ministry as a typical workplace. This was important to gauge the feelings of staff, whether they owned or did not own social media accounts. With regard to their feelings on whether they thought social media was useful in their day-to-day operations, only 21% felt that it was of no consequence, whereas 43% felt it was generally useful with 21% also indicating that they had found social media to be such an asset in

their operations. Moreover, 14% said they found social media to be such a critical component that most of their duties could not be effectively done without social media platforms being used to facilitate them. Table 4.10 presents the results.

Table 4.10: How useful they felt social media is in their duties

Response	Not useful	Useful	Very Useful	Unavoidable	Total
Frequency	15	30	15	10	70
Percentage	21.4	42.9	21.4	14.3	100

The results in Table 4.10 indicate a promise in the adoption and use of social media in organisational communication since most modern processes require seamless communication flow in interactions, and embracing new technology-based communication for doing things in the public service cannot be gainsaid. In an interview with the administrators, it became clear how social media is influencing the achievement of the ministry’s mandates. They expressed the need for investment in the digital infrastructure and bandwidth, which could ensure a seamless communication among member states of the East African Community (EAC). For instance, an administrator indicated, “we have adequate and sustainable internet around here, but our problem lies with the bandwidth, where it has proved inefficient to be able to consistently run several operations at a time. We know, for instance, that this has been earmarked for improvement to sustain our engagements with our regional partners”.

The study found that social media thought to be capable of revolutionizing the way people communicate with people and organisations as well. It was generally agreed that social media must be mainstreamed in order to help shade a negative attitude that people have had, terming them informal platforms for social communication alone (Manoharan & Bennett 2013; Kash 2012). An administrator said, “*If things continue this way, and all staff embrace social media in*

communication, we will have no choice, but to institutionalize it as part of our communication strategy". The implication of this is that social media has gained some status in organisational communication in public organisations.

4.4: Social media preferences among staff in the Ministry of East African Community

The second objective of the study was to investigate the preferences of social media platforms among staff in the Ministry of East African Community. The ultimate goal of this was to determine which of the social media platforms was most preferred by the staff to guide in case the ministry wanted to institutionalize social media for its internal communication. The study sought the data on social media platform preferences, by determining how they accessed social media while in their offices, which channels they preferred for internal communication and the challenges they encountered while accessing and using social media in their day-to-day interactions. The following sub-sections present results in detail.

4.4.1: How staff accessed social media while in their ministry offices

The study sought the technology through which the respondents accessed their social media while at work to give a picture of the infrastructure available and whether they used them. The respondents were presented with the options of mobile phones, computers and other sources such as iPad and laptops. The assumption of the study was that these were the main gadgets through which people access new media communication for their use. According to the findings 40 of them, representing 57% said they accessed through desktop computers in the offices, 36% of the respondents indicated they used their mobile phones to access social media, while only 7% gave other sources like iPad, laptops, tablets as the means they used to access social media in their offices. Table 4.11 shows the results.

Table 4.11: Technology through which staff accessed social media in their offices

Response	Mobile phone	Computer	Others; iPad, Laptop	Total
Frequency	25	40	05	70
Percentage	35.8	57.1	7.1	100

From the findings, it is clear that most of the respondents indicated desktop computers as the tools they used to access the internet in their offices. They also indicated that most of their desktop computers were connected to the internet. There was also free Wi-Fi to be used by staff as long as one had a login password. This implies that there was sufficient technological infrastructure at the ministry, which were supportive of social media involvement by the staff. Additionally, it was noted that the public service had embraced new technologies used to support technology-based communication. It is significant to note that all respondents, even those without social media accounts knew the gadgets or technologies through which they may access social media for internal communication purposes. When asked during an interview, it was demonstrated that the ministry had the basic equipment and data to support such communication. There was, however, a varied opinion concerning the use of newer gadgets to support social media communication. An administrator quipped, *“In this place we even have colleagues who don’t understand that they can make calls freely within the ministry using WhatsApp even if one lacks airtime”*. From the study, it was noted desktop computers were preferred as the main source of social media platforms. Smart phones, iPads and tablets were considered newer forms of communication technology especially among the relatively older generation of staff.

4.4.2: Preferred media for internal communication among staff in the ministry

The study wanted to know the social media platform(s), which the staff most preferred for their internal communication. The respondents were given four choices to make from letters, memos, intercoms and social media as listed on the website of the ministry as the platforms for communication. Out of the 70 respondents, 30 of them being 43% believed that memos were the most effective and convenient channel for internal communication, and 21.4% indicated they preferred using letters. A similar number of 21.4% preferred to use intercoms as a form of internal communication, with only 14% showing preference to social media to the other platforms. The choices placed to respondents were calculated to enable the researcher understand the place of social media in a context that also relied on other media too for communication. The fact that majority of the respondents had their first preferences being traditional media lends credence to the assertion that traditional media are still generally trusted in organisational communication, and that social media has just started to gain a footing in this context. Table 4.12 captures the results.

Table 4.12: Preferred channels for internal communication among ministry staff

Response	Letters	Memos	Intercom	Social media	Total
Frequency	15	30	15	10	70
Percentage	21.4	42.9	21.4	14.3	100

From Table 4.12, it is clear that social media is the least preferred means of organisational internal communication where there are traditional channels such as letters and memos, which have been known to be the formal channels for organisational communication. In the advent of technology, the traditional media have been relayed through social media platforms too (Kingsley 2010; Kaplan, et al 2010). For instance, there have been cases where memos and

letters have been sent through Facebook, WhatsApp or email to the recipients. Additionally, there have been social media pages like tweeter, Facebook, Instagram and websites where organisational communication has taken place, which shows the interdependence of these media channels in organisational communication.

From the interview with administrators, it was noted that social media has formed part of organisational communication, especially with external publics. It was very common to see twitter pages of the ministry sending and receiving information between the ministry and publics. In an interview with the Digital Manager, it was clear that traditional and new media were collaborating to communicate the mandate of the ministry. The Digital Manager observed that,

“Nowadays there are a lot of things that concern us about our public, and our digital platforms seem to be more visited than the actual visits the public make to the ministry for enquiry, this means our clients are changing with change in technology and we cannot remain in the dark”.

The results showed that Facebook was the most preferred among social media platforms of the ministry when it came to internal communication. This preference was informed by ease of use, popularity of Facebook, and the notion that it had certain semblance of formality according to the staff. The Communications Head observed that Facebook was the social media site with the highest number of following and most of the enquiries about the ministry happened through Facebook as the oldest of all the social media platforms in use at the ministry (Viteriti 1997; Avery, et al 2010). He observed that,

“We have a huge following on our Facebook Page, and this has been attributed to the fact that we have been using it for a longer time compared to other platforms that are just gaining traction now”

4.4.3: Challenges encountered while using social media for internal communication

On the question of the challenges the staff faced while using technological platforms to pass internal information, 25 out of the 70 translating to 36% indicated that they had faced challenges, while 64% of the respondents said that they had no challenges using social media especially Facebook. Among those who faced some challenges, a greater number comprising 40% indicated that the challenge they had was that of access to the posts shared through the ministry's social media platforms because they did not know what exactly they were supposed to do after seeing the posts, since little information had been shared on what exactly where the action points for each one of them upon receipt of the posts. The 60% equally indicated the challenges as being slow internet that could not open some posts, especially those with audio and video clips (which they seemed more interested in), some inaccessible sites and restricted access of some sites for those relying on the wireless internet (WIFI) to access social media through their mobile phones, iPad, and tablets. Table 4.13 summarises the results on whether the respondents encountered the challenges or not during social media use for internal communication within the ministry.

Table 4.13: Challenges encountered with social media for internal communication

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	25	45	70
Percentage	35.7	64.2	100

When the respondents were asked to specify the actual challenges, they faced while using social media for internal communication, most of them including those without social media accounts responded that there were numerous challenges as captured in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Whether respondent personally embraced social media

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. The internet was too slow	5	20
II. Couldn't access some sites	5	20
III. The WIFI couldn't open some accounts	5 10	20 40
IV. Didn't know the action points		
Total	25	100

The fact that there were technical challenges with access to internet was a general challenge with limited bandwidth capacity of the internet system in Kenya. Earlier in the decade, the government had embarked of a national initiative to improve the communication infrastructure though adoption of underground cable to connect Kenya with the global community. This has addressed some of the challenges and more efforts are still being made to broaden the telecommunication spectrum in the region to ensure efficient communication (Mangro 2012).An administrator indicated that the problems they faced would soon be addressed as they had embarked on a regional improvement of the telecommunication lines through underground cable layout to increase regional communication. In line with this statement, it was instructive to learn that much effort so far has yielded fruits through the digital migration that country had seen over the last six years, which have consequently boosted access to communication in conformity with both regional integration objective and the country's Vision 2030 and other technology driven growth pathways in Kenya.

4.5: Factors determining preferences of social media by employees of Ministry of EAC

The third objective of this study was to investigate the factors that determine the preferences of social media platform(s) for internal communication among staff of Ministry of East African Community. The ultimate goal was to understand the reasons behind the choices that the staff

makes regarding social media for use and gratification. Under this objective, the study sought to find out whether the respondents personally embraced social media as a channel for internal communication, whether they would utilise social media in their interaction with other people, whether they relied on internet to run operations, and whether the ministry would still achieve its goals without reliance on social media platforms for communication. The following sub-sections present the results based on specific questions in the survey tool.

4.5.1: Whether the ministry staff embraced technology in internal communication

The respondents were asked whether they embraced technology in their communication. This was an important entry question aimed at determine why they liked or not the new technology-based communication platforms in their day-to-day interactions. The results indicate that 38 out of the 70 representing 54% said they never embraced social media, while 37% of the respondents indicated they embraced social media, with only 9 % of the respondents being unsure of whether they embraced or not embraced social media technology in communication. The implication of this is that many people still do not trust social media to be used for internal communication in organisations (Raine 2011; Sanders 2011) such as the ministry. This is presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Whether respondent personally embraced social media

Response	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Frequency	26	38	06	70
Percentage	37	54	09	100

From the findings, it was noted that majority of the staff did not embrace new media technology for internal communication despite knowledge of the same. The fact that some staff were unsure of whether they embraced the technology revealed that some of the staff did not know which of the media are called social media. When this was explained to a few of them during survey, they

were able to connect the social media with certain operations they well understood. An administrator said,

“We will need to sensitise all our staff on how to use these platforms when we are about to gazette them as official means of communication as even some of those who use them do not know that they are called as such-social media”.

In this study, ownership or embracing of new media technology was likened with adoption for use of the social media platforms for communication, and as long as the staff showed that they were owning and using the network for communication, it was thought that they had adopted it for their communication.

4.5.2: What ministry staff felt about social media use for internal communication

On this question, a majority consisting of 43% indicated that they felt social media was important in their operation because of it was easier to receive and send feedback through social media. 14% felt that it was the tool used by majority especially in modern day world for internal communication, 23% felt that they only embraced social media just because their colleagues. While a small number comprising 20% of the respondents said they had no choice but to have social media as a channel of communication since it had been a rule in the ministry. Table 4.16 shows the results. In the table it was clear that the staff though social media were important for several reasons that they suggested.

Table 4.16: What the respondents felt about social media for internal Communication

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. It's the tool used by many in office	10	14
II. It's easier to receive/send feedback	30	43
III. All my colleagues use it hence no choice	16	23
IV. We are forced to use it	14	20
Total	70	100

4.5.3: What ministry staff felt about social media platforms being made compulsory use

The researcher sought to find out the feelings of ministry staff in case social media platforms use was made compulsory to help with internal communication. The ultimate goal of this question was to gauge their preparedness about change in communication management. It was also an important indicator of how the staff would appreciate the mainstreaming of technology into the communication strategy of the ministry as required by Kenya Vision 2030 of technology adoption for effective service delivery. On this question, 72% of the respondents agreed that it should be mandatory for all members of staff to adopt new technology for communication, while 8% disagreed with the idea of make social media channels compulsory for internal communications. Additionally, 22% observed that if it was made compulsory, they would comply although they chose to remain non-committal about it. However, when this question was posed to the communications manager, he indicated that it was supposed to be subjected to them for opinion before such suggestions were made. He said,

“If your study or some other one will find out that our staff are comfortable with social media being considered part of internal communication strategy, we won’t have a choice but to oblige, you know we are meant to serve them”.

Table 4.17 presents the results.

Table 4.17: Staff views on making social media compulsory for internal communication

Response	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	05	15	30	20	70
Percentage	7.5	21.3	42.8	28.5	100

The study also sought to summarise the views of the ministry staff on making social media mandatory for internal communication. The table below presents some concerns that the staff felt

must be addressed first before rolling out the programme. From the interview with the Communications Head, it was clear that those for the idea were relatively younger staff, while the older employees favoured the status quo to remain. The ministry was noted to be in the process of reviewing their communications policy to mainstream new media or social media in its operations. As to whether they recommended social media to be made compulsory, the Communications Head was reluctant to give a direction, indicating the need to study their employees to determine what they need as opposed to forcing them with an innovation that would not sell among majority of the population in the Ministry. The results are presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Employee feelings about mandatory social media internal Communication

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. It should be free will	20	29
II. We lack internal capacity	30	43
III. It will make internal communication faster	16	23
IV. It will boost the Ministry's sensitization mandate	14	06
Total	40	100

From Table 4.18, there were mixed feelings on whether social media is to be made compulsory or not in the ministry. While others felt it should, others felt it should not be made compulsory. Some felt that making it compulsory would make internal communication seamless and faster, less tedious since all one needed is a network connection. Others felt that making social media compulsory would be a boost to the ministry whose core mandate is coordinating the inter-East African Community activities, which requires a lot of sensitization and social media was viewed as a tool with a very wide range of audience and less costly.

However, a greater number comprising 43% felt that the ministry lacked internal capacity to fully utilise social media as mandatory tool for internal communication. They said the fact that

most of the members of staff did not even own social media accounts was a clear indication that much was needed to be done before thinking of “imposing” the same on employees. Additionally, 29% said social media was still viewed, as informal communication hence ought to be left for individuals to decide to use or not to use. They argued that it was supposed to be an individual decision concerning preferences and gratifications.

4.5.4: Ministry’ social media platforms preferred by most of the staff

The study sought to investigate the social media platforms that staff preferred most from amongst platforms at the ministry. This was important in informing the management decisions regarding the platforms to identify for mainstreaming in the internal communication strategy and policy. From the results on platforms most preferable among the staff, Facebook had highest endorsement with 35 out of 70 being 50 % of respondents indicating that they viewed it mostly, twitter and website had 15% each and only 7% of the respondents preferred Instagram. Table 4.19 presents the data on the social media platforms and their preferences by the employees of the Ministry of East African Community.

Table 4.19: Social media mostly viewed by respondents

Response	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Frequency	15	35	15	05	70
Percentage	21.4	50	21.4	7.2	100

4.5.5: Reasons for Preference or lack of preference for social media platforms of EAC

The researcher sought to investigate the reasons for the preferences or lack of it on social media platforms used by the Ministry of East African Community. From the results, the high number of preferences on Facebook was because most of them could be notified for any Facebook post

hence prompting them to view and like them. They indicated that a website took too long to load; hence, they would rather avoid it. Additionally, 21% felt that twitter was complicated for them hence avoided it. The rest of the respondents indicated that they never preferred Instagram since it seemed so unofficial to them. Table 4.20 shows the reasons why the staff preferred or did not prefer the social media platforms.

Table 4.20: Reasons why respondents preferred or did not prefer social media platforms

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. Website takes too long to load	30	42.9
II. Facebook gives me a notification on the post	20	28.6
III. Twitter is a bit complicated	15	21.4
IV. Instagram doesn't look so official	5	7.1
Total	70	100

4.5.6: Whether the staff commented on, liked or shared any posts on ministry social media

On whether after viewing, the employees acted, through likes, shares and comments on the posts, a greater 79% of the respondents just viewed, with 21% indicating that they took action after every post popped in the social media platforms. For the 55 respondents who indicated “no action” as their preference, 20 of them being 36% said they only viewed social media for pleasure hence saw no reason for comments and shares. Additionally, 27% said they were reluctant since they did not think anybody cared to note and act on the comments. Moreover, 27% thought nobody cared about the comments and 18% feared they would be victimised out of their comments hence preferred to just view and leave. The Communications Head indicated that

most of the internal staff were reluctant to comment on their social media platforms for either fear of victimization or lack of interest with the organisation. He said,

“As you may be aware not any staff of an organisation can be expected to feel safe while giving feedback lest it be used against them, but sometime we honestly require feedback which we rarely get from those at the entry point in the service”.

Table 4.21 is a summary of this.

Table 4.21: Whether respondents liked, shared or commented on social media posts

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	15	55	70
Percentage	21.2	78.8	100

4.5.7: Why some staff did not share, comment or view posts on ministry social media

The table below also serves to show a summary of reasons why respondents did not share, comment or view of posts on the Ministry social media platforms. These were important to help understanding why employees did not prefer actions on the social media platforms.

Table 4.22: Reasons on why they ignored any action on the media posts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. I don't want to be victimised	10	18.2
II. I just view for pleasure	20	36.4
III. Nobody cares whether I comment or not	15	27.2
IV. Even if I comment nobody takes note	10	18.2
Total	55	100

4.5.7: Reasons some employees shared, commented or liked posts from social media

The researcher asked respondents to give some of the reasons they liked, commented on or shared some of the posts from the Ministry of East African Community social media platforms. Among the reasons given were that it showed responsibility, some employees just enjoyed actively interacting with posts, while others were social media advocates who were responsible for setting and directing agenda of things that need to be focused. Table 4.23 shows the results.

Table 4.23: Respondents on why they share like and comment on the social media posts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. It feels responsible	3	20
II. I enjoy liking and commenting on post	7	46.7
III. I advocate for social media	5	33.3
Total	15	100

4.6: Social media policy in the Ministry of East African Community

The fourth and last objective of this study was to explore the social media policy guiding the adoption and use of social media platforms for internal communication among employees of Ministry of East African Community. This was important to understand how the use of social media is regulated in such contexts. Social media has been accused for lack of clear policies and principles, making it to be relegated for social interaction or communication only. However, with the growth in new communication technology, the use of social media in organisations must be reviewed (Glaisyer 2010). This can be organised through putting in place organisational policies to guide its application in communication. Among issues to be addressed in this section are whether MEAC has intranet, whether there are regulations to use social media and the relevance of information delivered in the social media to the EAC stakeholders. The sub-sections below present the results under this objective.

4.6.1: Staff awareness of any regulations guiding social media use in MEAC

The researcher wanted to know from the respondents, whether they knew of any regulations guiding the application of social media in internal communication. When this question was asked, it was found that very high number of respondents consisting of 76% had no idea of any media policy with only 10 out of the respondents 70 being 14 % said they knew of the policy guiding social media communication. The implication of this was that social media had not become a household platform for internal communication per se because many respondents would have understood how the policy operates. Table 4.24 presents their responses on knowledge of social media policy.

Table 4.24: Awareness of the existence of social media policy for internal communication

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	10	60	70
Percentage	14.3	75.7	100

It should be understood that lack of awareness of the existence of the policy did not mean a lack of the said policy to guide such communication. For instance, when the same question was asked during an interview with the Communications Head, there was an indication of the existing of one, although it was not comprehensive enough and many employees were not socialized in it. He had this to say,

“Our communication strategy outlines principles of using social media during crisis management situation, and this may not be easily available for the general population, but to the specific committee dealing with conflicts and crises”.

It is instructive to note that a lack of policy to guide internal communication meant that it was not already acceptable for the said communication. It was also important to note that, the ministry was very open to proposal to mainstream social media within its communication strategy.

4.6.2: Whether social media policy was functional within the ministry

To ascertain the policy was functional, the research sought to know whether respondents had been denied access or barred from posting, sharing or liking information on the ministry social

media platforms, 64% said that had anything they posted was successfully uploaded to the platforms with the remaining 36% indicating that they had on some occasions been denied posting. The 25 respondents who said they had been denied access said the system gave the reason they could not post. Additionally, 10 out of the 25 being 40% said that the system indicated that whatever they wanted to post was not appropriate, with others indicating the reasons as just an error, simple access denied and the function not being supported by the network.

The fact that there was a number of respondents indicating they had been restricted from posting some material confirms that there was a functional social media communication policy, unknown or known to the members of staff. It was however worrying that the greater number of staff, 75% indicated that they were not even aware that such a policy existed. For those that were denied access for one reason or another, they were not even aware it was because of a policy regulating what could or could not be posted or shared on the platform. Most of them said after they could not post, they just ignored, after all, it was “just” social media and it was not that important to their daily duties.

The Communications Head who confirmed that the internet at the ministry was regulated to prevent access for those who wanted to post negative or abusive information confirmed the finding. He said, “*We have an internet user policy in place to check wrongful use, especially posting of hateful and sexual contents, which are automatically blocked from the system.* Even though this has worked, there are some challenges with the restrictions, especially for clients who are using their personal data to access the internet and social media platforms. Group social media platforms are however socially restricted through sanctions by such administrators. Table 4.25 shows the results.

Table 4.25: Whether staff had ever tried posting, but access was denied

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	25	45	70
Percentage	35.8	64.2	100

The researcher sought to understand why some posts had access denied. This was sought from all respondents in case they had information on why some post were accepted while others were denied. They responded variously as seen in the table below. On analysis, it was found that all posts denied access had certain quality that were categorized as dangerous or negative to fellow end-users and were therefore blocked from access. The communication and strategy managers, who indicated that it was the policy by the government to make all internet service providers to protect users from dangerous contents, corroborated this finding. Table 4.26 provides a summary of the results.

Table 4.26: Respondents view on why internet access was denied

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I. It indicated inappropriate material	10	40
II. It simply indicated access denied	5	20
III. It indicated network doesn't support this function	5	20
IV. It indicated there's an error	5	20
Total	25	100

From the findings from both respondents and interviewees, it was clear that social media access and use in the Ministry of East African Community was regulated to protect users from dangerous content, which was a common phenomenon with end user security demands by system operators. It was also noted that these policies were important first step requirement for mainstreaming social media use, as many institutions with need to domesticate social media as part of organisational communication strategy have these as the main concerns to address. However, there was need for a more comprehensive policy guideline that will protect the ministry from cyber-attacks and loss of online contents. The ministry has to build capacity for its staff to be able to appreciate the use of social media for internal communication in order to save costs associated with traditional forms of communication for both internal and external publics

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1: Overview

This chapter presents the summary of the study by presenting the study objectives, methodology and key findings. The chapter further presents the conclusions drawn from the research findings guided by the study objectives. Lastly, the chapter presents the recommendations of the study concentrating on recommendations for policy improvement, strategy development and suggestions for further studies. The outline of this chapter is thus: summary, conclusions and recommendations as shown in the sections below.

5.2: Summary

The general objective of this study was to investigate the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in the Ministry of East African Community. The assumption of the study was that government public relations practice was projected to change with technological advancement that have revolutionized many sectors of the economy the world over. It was thus decided that this study be conducted to show how communication among staff of a government ministry was being practiced in the era of new communication technology, otherwise called social media era. Studies conducted before revealed that public relations practice in the private sector was changing through adoption and application of social media to meet the needs of their clients. The public sector that has been accused for being slow in technology adoption was focused in order to shade light on the growth of communication in the age of social media.

The specific objectives of the study were to determine the level of use of social media among staff of the Ministry of East African Community, to examine the social media platforms most preferred for internal communication among these staff, to explore the communication factors

that determine the preference of social media platforms for internal communication among the staff and to investigate the social media policy guiding internal communication at ministry.

The study relied on an eclectic method of theory building, where two theories were utilised. These included the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Cognitive Theory, both used in providing explanation on the adoption, communication factors and the use of social media platforms for government PR practice. The study employed a mixed method approach where two data collection tools, namely: the semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used. From the sample size of 80 participants for survey determined through systematic random sampling method, a response rate of 93% was achieved during data collection. The study also used purposive sampling technique to select three (3) participants for the in-depth interviews.

The study analysed qualitative and quantitative data, where the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics generated through the Statistical Packages for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 21 and presented in tables format, while qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis and presented in report and quotations, extensively used to triangulate the survey data. The findings were presented based on the four specific research objectives.

On the first objective of determining the level of social media use among staff at the Ministry of East African Community, it was found that a dismal (42%) had personal socializing accounts. Those who lacked accounts were represented by 57%, which indicates that the uptake of social media was general low among the staff in the Ministry of East African Community. The study had worked with the assumption that having a personal social media account was the first step towards the utilization of social media platforms for internal communication. This assumption was made despite the fact that having an account might not entirely make a person to access or

use it because some people may have social media accounts but never use them for communication. Similarly, some people may lack personal social media accounts but still have access to social media through accounts of other people closer to them like their spouse, children, friends or colleagues. For the sake of this study, social media access was associated with having active personal social media accounts. From the finding, it noted that those who had personal social media accounts were persuaded by those around them, which makes one believe that the ownership of account was determined by peer pressure in the place of work. Additionally, majority of the respondents observed that social media were very useful in the organisation for communication, even though most people lacked personal accounts. For instance, over 75% agreed that social media was very helpful; with 14% saying that social media were unavoidable for successful operations.

On the second objective, which was to determine the social media, platform (s) most preferred for internal communication among staff in the Ministry, it was noted that traditional media still had more preference compared with social media for organisational communication. It was found that letters, memos, intercoms and social media were rated in this order of preference. It was noted that social media was least preferred in contexts where traditional media were unavailable. When question was posed on the reason for not trusting social media, the general argument was that social media were informal means of communication that fitted well in social communication contexts. However, when social media were isolated from the traditional media platforms, a majority of the employees indicated Facebook as the most preferable. Among the reasons cited for this was ease of use, popularity and ability of Facebook to permit sharing, liking and viewing of posted information. The respondents indicated that Tweeter was very

complicated to use while Instagram was mainly for pictorial communication. As for WhatsApp, it was clear that it was meant for horizontal communication among people in the same department or section, but fitted well within social communication and mobilization.

On the third objective which was to explore the communication factors that determine the preference of social media for use in internal communication, it was noted that ease of use, popularity of the platform, identity issues such as relevance to age groups, cost implications, accessibility of the media platforms and individual and technological challenges were noted as the key factors that determined social media preference for internal communication within the ministry. For instance, most of the respondents voted for Facebook because it was easy to use, it was popular with most of the staff and it was relevant for most of the socio-demographic profiles of the staff in the Ministry of East African Community. Instagram was thought to be exclusively for the youth to share photos to attract physical rating by the audiences. Additionally, WhatsApp was thought to be a platform for horizontal communication, where people of similar managerial level freely associated with each other. Internet for website and emails were thought to be very formal platforms, but access to network, and other technical challenges were presented as the hindrance factors. Other factors that were noted included a lack of embrace of social media by 54% of the respondents and the agitation for the ministry to make internal communication free for all platforms of communication.

On the fourth and last objective of the study to investigate the social media policy guiding internal communication at the Ministry of East African Community, it was found that the ministry has a communications department. The ministry also had a communications policy and communications strategy, although they were not comprehensive enough to include specific

policies for social media use. The social media platforms are Tweeter, Instagram, and Facebook and YouTube pages. Most of the staff lacked knowledge of the policies guiding internal communication, but were able to give examples of what look like a regulation in force in the ministry social media sites. For instance, they observed that when people post obscenity or negative information, the site denied them access or block such users. The sites were also sensitive to the contents posted, especially, it is impossible to post pornographic or nude materials on the sites. The respondents observed that the social media policies were functional each time to vet the content people exchanged on the Wi-Fi networks. When asked during interview, it was clear that the policies were not in the public domain, but were available especially actionable at the technical levels by technologists and internet service providers. The Communications head said that a review communications policy was in the offing to include social media specific policies due to unavailability of social media in modern day communication.

5.3: Conclusions

The study examined the practice of government public relations in the era of social media in the Ministry of East African Community in Kenya. The results indicated that the use of social media for internal communication was relatively low, evident by less than half of respondents owning personal social media accounts. Although this was due to plausible reasons, it was clearly noted that social media platforms were useful for internal communication in the era of new communication technology advancement. The study therefore concludes that despite the relatively low uptake, social media use in this government department was helpful, given the complexities in the new era of communication technology, which made it impossible to run operations without social media engagements with strategic publics.

The study explored the social media preferences among the ministry staff, and found that the employees still trusted traditional media over social media, where both were co-existing, arguing that traditional media were formal means of communication, whereas social media were informal means of communication. However, most of the staff indicated that Facebook was the most preferred social media platform to use for internal communication, if at all social media were to be mainstreamed for official communication in the ministry. They cited various reasons such as ease of use, popularity among peers and relevance to most of the socio-demographic variables that characterized the staff at the ministry.

The study explored the communication factors that determine the preference of social media for internal communication, and concluded that ease of use, peer pressure, authority and regulations were the main factors that affected the choice of social media to use. For instance, most staff had social media accounts because their spouses, friends, colleagues and children had the social media account, and could therefore not be left out. It was also concluded that all these factors affected which social media to embrace for social and organisational communication.

The study also concluded that the service providers were regulating social media use at the ministry although the most noted form of regulation was technical restrictions. The adoption and use of social media for internal communication would therefore require a comprehensive set of regulations before it was mainstreamed into the government communication systems to ensure safety and responsibility. It was also found that making social media a form of official communication required efforts to change attitudes and beliefs of staff that social media too were important platforms for official function in the organisation.

The overall conclusion of the study was that government public relations practice was quickly responding to the dynamics of globalisation caused by new technology, and people in government organisations too are adopting and using new media in communication. The results have shown that communication departments are currently responding to the needs of staff, especially on the adoption of new media or social media technology to communicate and compete with similar entities in both private and public as well as in the global space. The fact that all staff, whether with or without social media accounts, were confirming the inevitability of social media in their place of work was an indicator that public relations in government is not being left behind in technology adoption, and that public relations practitioners in these contexts were as well responsive to new developments in their official duties.

5.4: Recommendations for Policy and Strategy

- The study investigated the adoption of social media for internal communication among staff in the Ministry of East African Community and found that the rate of uptake, especially through owning of personal social media accounts was below average. This implied that communication departments should sensitise their staff on the value of socializing using social media since the study has indicated how important social media has been viewed by the staff
- There is need to make a communication strategy comprehensive enough by mainstreaming social media platforms most preferred into this, and developing and orienting all staff on the guiding policies for their use in organisational communication

- There is need for a sensitization effort to dissuade people against the belief that social media is only for informal social communication as opposed to the official organisational communication as well, since they are both channels of communication.
- For the sake of globalisation, there is need to expand new media infrastructure in government institutions to rid the space of the challenges posed by social media access and utilization. This will ensure a successful resolution of emerging issues in public communication for service delivery.

5.5: Suggestions for further studies

Since the present study was only based on the Ministry of East African Community alone, future studies should seek to improve on the findings of this study by extending the population to include staff from other departments in the public service.

This study has concentrated on a public institution and it would be informative for another study to be conducted in a private institution in order to compare and contrast public relations practice trends in the two contexts as a basis for showing the trends to accept or discount allegations of better public relations practices in one of the contexts.

The study also recommends another study to show how new media has affected new public relations from the viewpoint of external stakeholders.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire to EAC Staff

Section A: Bio-data of respondents

Tick appropriately

Name (optional/can use initials)				
Gender	Female	Male		
Age(Years)	29 and below	30-40	41-50	51-60
Education level				
Primary				
Secondary				
Post-Secondary				

Section B: Level of social media use in the Ministry of East African Community

1. How long have you worked/engaged with the Ministry (years)?

Below
 1-3
 3-6
 Above 6

2. What level are you in the Ministry?

Entry
 Middle
 Management

3. Do you have a personal social media account?

No
 Yes

4. If yes in 3 above, list the social media accounts you have.....

5. If no in 3 above, explain.....

6. How frequently do you use social media in the Ministry?

Rarely
 Often
 Always
 Randomly

7. How useful is social media in your place of work

Section C: Social media preferences by EAC staff

8. How do you access social mostly while in your office?

Mobile Phone Computer Others: ipad, laptop

9. Given a choice, which channel would you prefer for internal communication?

Letters Memos Intercom Social media

10. Have you encountered challenges while using social media platforms for internal communication?

Yes No

Explain your answer.....

Section D: Factors that determine preference of social media by EAC staff

11. Do you personally embrace technology as a form of communication?

Yes No Not sure

12. Explain.....

13. Social media should be utilised as a communication channel (Tick appropriately)

Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Explain your answer.....

14. Do you always rely on internet in your office?

Yes No

Comment on its stability

15. Which ministry's social media platform do you view mostly and why?

.....
16. Do you comment, like or share any post(s) on the ministry's social media platforms?

Yes

No

Explain.....

17. The ministry cannot do without social media

- 1. Disagree
- 2. Neutral
- 3. Agree
- 4. Strongly agree

Explain.....

Section E: Social Media Policy guiding internal Communication at Ministry of EAC

18. Should the ministry have an intranet for easy of communication?

Yes

No

19. Do you know of any existing regulates that dictates what should/not be posted on Ministry's social media platforms?

Yes

No

(b)Explain.....

20. Have you ever tried posting, liking or sharing anything then access was denied?

Yes

No

21. Comment on the relevance of the information posted in the Ministry's social media platforms.....

Appendix II: Interview Guide

Section A: Bio data

Name (optional/can use initials)	
Current position	
Highest Qualification	

Section B

1. Do you think social media should be utilised for internal communication in the Ministry?
2. Give your reason for question 1 above.
3. Do you feel social media has adequately been utilised in the Ministry?
4. Briefly explain 3 above
5. What social media platforms do you visit most (if any)?
6. Elaborate your 5 above.

Thank you

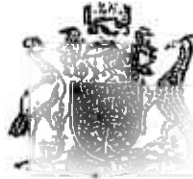
APPENDIX III: Budget

Attached is a budget for the same.	
1. Printing Questionnaires and In-depth interviews	Sh750
2. Transport to and from the Ministry	Sh1000
3. Water	Sh500
4. Food	Sh500
5. Editing and proofreading	Sh5000
6. Copy of field work certificate	Sh50
7. Contingencies	Sh. 1,000
Total	Kshs. 8,500

Appendix IV: Work plan

ACTIVTY	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
PROPOSAL DEFENSE						
DATA COLLECTION	✓					
DATA COLATION AND ANALYSIS		✓	✓			
PROJECT REPORT				✓	✓	✓

Appendix V: Certificate of Fieldwork



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Telegram: Journalism Varsity Nairobi
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Email: director-soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197-00100
Nairobi, GPO
Kenya

REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 07.06.2019 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/87619/2016

Name: BERNARD MWENDWA

Title: THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE MINISTRY OF KAC

Dr. Silas Ombao
SUPERVISOR

[Signature]
SIGNATURE

28/6/2019
DATE

Dr Samuel Sirungi
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

[Signature]
SIGNATURE

28/6/2019
DATE

Prof Ndetei Ndetei
DIRECTOR

[Signature]
SIGNATURE



Appendix VI: Originality Report

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19-11-2019

Appendix VII: Certificate of Corrections



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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Kenya

REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 25.10.2019 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project/thesis can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: K50/87619/2019

Name: BERNARD MWENDUA KIMUNDO

Title: THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC

RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE MIND OF KAC

Dr. S. Onano
SUPERVISOR

SIGNATURE

25/11/2019
DATE

Dr Samuel Sirinji
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

SIGNATURE

06/12/2019
DATE

Dr Samuel Sirinji
DIRECTOR

SIGNATURE/STAMP

06/12/2019
DATE

8 DEC 2019