ISSUES MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES; ENHANCING CORPORATE REPUTATION OF OIL AND GAS FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was to examine the relationship between issues management strategies and corporate reputation in oil and gas companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design, taking cognizance of cross sectional survey approach. The study population comprised of 17 oil and gas companies in Rivers State. Three human resources managers were derived from each organization of the 17 oil and gas companies in Rivers State, thus making the study target respondents to be 51 and entire 51 respondents were covered using census approach. The data collection was done through structured closed ended questionnaire and gathered data analysed using descriptive statistics and presented with the aid SPSS version 20.0. The study hypotheses tested were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics with coefficient value of 0.05. The results of analysed data showed that the dimensions of issues management strategies which include; issues identification, issues response, issues analysis and issues prioritization significantly correlated positively with the measures of organizational reputation being community recognition and stakeholders support. The finding also showed a high moderating effect of organizational culture on issues management strategies and organizational reputation of oil and gas community in Rivers State. Relying on the empirical findings, the study concluded that issues management strategies have positive significant relationship with organizational reputation. We therefore recommended that, the dimensions of issues management strategies and organizational reputation: issues identification, issues response, issues analysis and issues prioritization identified in this study be utilized as it enhances organizational reputation measures of community recognition and stakeholders support.

Keywords: Issues Management, Issues Identification, Response, Issues analysis, Issues Prioritzation, Community Recognition, Stakeholders Supports.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of issue management strategic (IMS) first emerged when practitioners of corporate strategic planning realized a step was missing between the SWOT analysis of the Harvard model and the development of strategies. That step was the identification of strategic issues. Strategic issue management (SIM) approaches are process components or pieces of the larger strategic planning process. This approach is primarily associated with Ansoff (1980) and focuses attention on the recognition and resolution of strategic issues - "forthcoming developments, either inside or outside the organization, which are likely to have an important impact on the ability of the enterprise to meet its objectives." Many firms now include a strategic issue identification step as part of full-blown strategy revision exercises, and also as part of less comprehensive annual strategic reviews (King 1982). The oil and gas companies today are face with a lot of challenges that affect their corporate reputation, especially, Rivers State in particular and Niger Delta as a whole. The management of most organization's pay attention to what is actually important, unfortunately, oil and gas companies in Rivers State decision-makers often sacrificed 80 percent of their time on the least important tasks, refused their corporate social responsibilities and as a result, many of their resources are often wasted leading to issues. As a result, managers and stakeholders of oil and gas companies need to identify factors affecting their understanding of issues management as to enable them divide alternative means of managing issues that no actions are necessary for them at the present time, but paid attention continuously as to know the issues that could be considered as part of the organization's current strategic planning cycle and issue which require immediate response and therefore take action on them in the current day-to-day manner as to solved them and avoid organization bad corporate reputation in the society they operate. Most oil and gas companies do not give proper attention on issue affecting the organization they rather pay lips services as a result of corruption and nepotism and this has affected most oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State. However issue management strategies such as issue identification, management, prioritise, analysis, monitoring and response will help in building corporate reputation of oil and gas companies in Rivers State.

Issue management strategy is a managerial function that helps corporations identify, analyze, and respond to social and political concerns that can significantly affect them. Due to the potential of issues management activities to influence organizational outcome variables, the function has received generous attention from strategic management scholars, as evidenced by a steady stream of publications on the topic in the Strategic Management Journal (Hillman & Keim, 2001). Scholarly advancement in the study of issues management has not always been linear and progressive, however, as academics studying issue evolution and issues management processes have increasingly organized themselves into two more or less disconnected camps. One of the more pressing problems facing researchers trying to assess the contribution of professionally executed issues management practices to corporate reputation is that the received literature suggests an overwhelming variety of tools and techniques for managing forthcoming developments.

The word reputation, like some other abstract words (love, quality, success, etc.), is a concept that is quite difficult to understand and define. The word reputation is etymologically derived from the word “reputen” in English and “reputer” in Old French and is based on the Latin word “reputure” which means, “to think about a topic”. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines reputation as “The guess in a person's mind; a character attributed to a person, thing or action in terms of society in general” (Davies, Chun, Silva & Roper, 2013). The Turkish Language Institution (TDK) expresses the word reputation as the equivalent of the words “being respected, being valuable or trustworthy, respectability, prestige”. Reputation is also used as the equivalent of the word “respect”, which is expressed as a perception of a person or an object formed over time by outsiders or a community. In other words, the corporate reputation is affected by the interaction of each unit, department and employee in the organization with another stakeholder (Gotsi & Wilson, 2011). Scientific circles and most researchers argue that reputation is an important intangible asset that is rare, valuable, sustainable and difficult to imitate by others (Schwaiger, 2014). Corporate reputation is also defined as a collective structure that defines the total perceptions of multiple stakeholders about an organization’s performance. In addition, in the literature, corporate reputation management is accepted as a result of long-term evaluations about organizations together with incomplete information in the society (Lloyd & Mortimer, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Issues Identification: Typically, public policy development starts with the identification of a problem. Defining the problem accurately is key. Many times there are varying views on the source and nature of a public issue/problem; views that may be framed by ideology, life experience, dominant societal values and norms, academic orientation or other considerations. Most social, economic and environmental problems, from poverty to climate change through structural unemployment, have multiple dimensions, which need to be thoroughly understood so that multi-pronged policy measures may be coordinated among governments and other stakeholders in an effort to mitigate or resolve these issues. Issue identification helps organization to recognize and target the specific social problems or policy areas on which it can and should act. The identification problem is a deductive, logical issue that must be solved before estimating an economic model. In a demand and supply model, the equilibrium point belongs to both curves, and many presumptive curves can be drawn through such a point. We need prior information on the slopes, intercepts, and error terms to identify the true from the presumptive demand and supply curves. Such prior information will give a set of structural equations. If the equations are linear, and the error terms are normally distributed with zero mean and constant variance, then a model is formed for estimation. A typical identification process may fix the demand curve and shift the supply curve, cutting the demand curve at many points to trace it out. By the zero mean assumption of the error term, half the observations are expected above and half below the demand curve. In the same way, the supply curve can be identified. Charles (1995) the order condition is the most used technique for identifying a model. Each equation in the model has a predetermined variable that is either given from outside of the model (exogenous) or determined in the model (endogenous) but fitted with a lag.

Issue response: Strategic issue response is a process during which managers give sense to the continual flow of ambiguous and complex environmental data, which determines the organization position (Kent & Lin, 2014). Dutton and her colleagues (1983), believes that the importance of strategic decision- makings. This influences the strategic decision-making process and subsequently organizational selection and performance (Fearon *et al.*, 2012). In other words, how managers diagnose environmental events and transformation, is a vital issue because different diagnoses could lead to different strategic responses (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Lant, Milliken, and Batra, 1992). Gilbert (2006), has stated that managers investigate their environment changes, interpret them, and label them according to cognitive mechanisms. He has acknowledged that CEO's framing of environmental changes in the positive and negative terms affects organizational changes. In Dutlon's idea, there is a mutual relation between the manger and the environmental events and transformations in strategic issue diagnosis. In one hand, environmental transformations are partially in the form of objective realities that influence how issues are diagnosed and understood, limitations existing in this context, and how to take action about them. On the other hand, they are the managers that confirm the existence of these transformations and events in their surrounding environment, interact with them, and are influenced by them (Dutton, 1993). Studies have attributed the strategic issue diagnosis to various organizational characteristics; for example, culture and the structure of strategy and information processing the extent of diversity is the chief management team (Plambeck & weber, 2009). Olambeck and weber (2010) have also pointed out the role of previous experiences in data processing. Brown and Aisenhart (1997) depict organization as a plurastic market of ideas, in which issue are sold through managers' and individuals' persuasive efforts and are bought by chief managers who adjust the organization's strategic direction. In such a picture, effective management is achieved through proper understanding of the elements of the key process of issue selling.

When an issue has been determined, then a specific reasoning is required to be made by organizational participants to specify the excellence of the issue (Fearon et al., 2012). The process of strategic issue selling refers to activities that are performed to influence others' awareness in issue understanding. Issue selling could be considered as the main basis for the explanation of why and how superior managers assign their awareness and time to a particular issue (kunnas, 2009). In fact, issue selling points to the process by which individuals influence on others' attention to events and on their understanding of events, transformations and trends related to the organization performance (Ansoff, 1980). Dutton and Ashford (1993) and Field and Woldridge (1996) assert that because any problem is not strategic by itself, individual's claim about what is important (for example, issue selling) determines which change plan is activated in the organization (Dutton *et al.,* 2001). One of the main indicators concerning the issue selling success is the amount of time and attention that superior manager devotes to an issue. Attraction of collective attention toward an issue is displayed by types of behaviours: (a) issue naming; (b) collecting data related to the issue; (c) talking about the issue; and (d) establishing role or task-force specific to the issue. Drawing the attention of the superior management is the progress needed for their fundamental taking which may be to assign more material resource to an issue. One of the groups who could have an important effect on the process of issue in trance into the strategic agenda is the middle managers. Kaunter (1989) believes that the potential ability of middle managers is to influence the superior managers' perception and strategizing (strategy-making) based on their organizational situation. Because the middle managers have the pulse of the organization performance, so they can convince others and pose new ideas which may not be discovered by the superior managers.

Issue Analysis: Issue analysis is a process of weighing our expertise, capacity and experience against the issue complexity. In other words, we need to make sure that the issue we face may be solved with resources that we would be able to mobilize. Another important thing: we need to see that the path for a solution does exist and there are practical opportunities/possibilities to make the changes needed. Finally there is a need to evaluate related risks to make sure they are manageable. Issue analysis is about applying structured, rigorous, logical thinking through discussion with a wider set of stakeholders. Discussing possibilities provides an opportunity for creative dialectic about question structures (Motii & Sanders, 2014). Having key stakeholders involved helps to secure their buy-in to the final product. Experience has shown that audit teams are likely to achieve a better question hierarchy if they adopt an open, inclusive approach, involving a wide range of stakeholders. One auditor sitting in his/her office and attempting to come up with a good question hierarchy or outline report, and then submitting it to their manager for review and so on, is not necessarily the best way to make progress. In addition, issue analysis has the potential for some “softer” benefits in terms of greater team ownership of the direction of the audit. Issue analysis is not a tool to help identify suitable topics for audit in the first place, nor whether a proposed audit is practicable. And while determining the sub-questions should help the audit team identify the audit work that needs to be done, Issue Analysis in itself does not specify the methodology – exactly how the questions are to be answered. In some ways, the most important element of a successful issue analysis process is the hard work done in the audit team before and after the main, set-piece meeting.

There is no point in investing time and effort into an issue analysis discussion, if audit team has not done justice to the preparatory work needed beforehand (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). The success of the issue analysis depends to a large part on the quality of the work done before: knowledge of the area audited, programme logic model, previous audit reports, views of internal stakeholders, Commission, academics and other experts, risk analysis etc. Another important ingredient of good preparation for the issue analysis is to ensure that participants in the meeting have enough knowledge to contribute effectively. Thus the team should prepare materials for meeting participants, and distribute at least two days before the issue analysis meeting. Furthermore, before a session, the audit team should have thought hard about what they see as the potential avenues for questioning. In the material the team can propose an overall audit question, and supporting sub-questions. The audit team may designate a single meeting as “the issue analysis session”. If necessary, the team should be prepared to hold further issue analysis sessions, with some or all of the original participants. Problem analysis is a series of steps for identifying problems, analyzing them, and developing solutions to address them. It's an inquiry or investigation into the causes of an error, failure, or unexpected incident. While the major aim of issue analysis is to develop solutions, the process also provides you with an in-depth understanding of a problem that enables you to prevent other kinds of problems that might arise from the same cause. This method of analysis approaches a problem by examining its causes and effects. This method explores both the direct and the indirect causes and effects of the problem. By establishing a linear connection from the root cause of a problem to its subsequent effects, you can better understand it, which allows you to develop effective solutions (Fearon, 2012). This analysis is highly comprehensive, as it requires you to identify all the causes of an issue while also determining their level of contribution to the problem. Using a cause-and-effect analysis means considering that one problem may have multiple effects that may be difficult to trace. This method of analysis is most beneficial if you have proper access to and understand all the material factors surrounding a problem.

Issues Prioritization: Issues prioritization helps us understand what are the first set of problems that need solving?. We do this by factoring in the intersection of all the things that are important to the business and the users. This exercise gives us the ability to focus our solution generation on a specific problem. Prioritization and analysis are connected. To make choices, a group needs clear criteria for ranking problems in order of importance. The group will probably debate both the criteria and the analysis since people see things differently and have diverse interests, even when they share a common problem. Choosing priorities involves looking at the causes and impact of problems as well as analyzing solutions. The organization need to decide which strategy is feasible for your group and which offers the most political gain. In social justice advocacy, problems related to exclusion and inequity are a priority. The researcher agrees that a prioritization model for investments and projects can help to prioritize the right investments and to make the right decisions that would affect profitability of the company, i.e. cost savings. At the moment the researcher believes that the model will help the plant in the micro-changes most, making better prioritizing of investments, but maybe this study also could be a ground for a future framework when investing generally and possible function as general concept in the complex of organization as well. The management team at the plant thinks this problem is a financial problem, as financing is a constraint compare to new investments needed. In that sense the problem is mostly an economic problem, but as the study is about doing a model that can prioritize the right investments it can also be called a structural problem, because of the reason that they sometimes fail to make the right decisions when selecting which projects, activities and investments that they should invest in. The expectation of the work to be done is an investment model that can help the plant to prioritize and make better decisions (Olambeck & weber, 2010).

The dilemmas are; how do you create a model like this? Which methods are to be used? Which aspects need to be considered and used? How should the model prioritize, evaluate and select the right issues? How should it be presented and visualized? What program should be used? Those are some questions that need to be answered, to even have the chance to solve this problem. Oil and gas Companies’ needs to proffer solutions by picking the right strategy in enhancing the industry for the overall benefits of the society. To continue being a market leader in the industry, they also need to adapt and assimilate to the change that it brings. When talking about industry 4.0 the main thing is that what was started in the third industrial revolution is now becoming adopted to computerization and automation systems fuelled by machine learning and data (Marr, 2018).

Corporate Reputation: Hall (1992) points out that corporate reputation needs many years to be shaped; that is, it is one of the most difficult resources for an organization to accumulate. Corporate reputation is the collective representation of actions and outcomes of the past and present of the organization that describe its capacity to obtain valuable outcomes for different stakeholders (Gregorio et al., 2006). Corporate reputation is a mainly emotional concept that is difficult to rationalize or to explicate (Groenland, 2002). Corporate reputation is an aggregation of a single stockholder's perceptions of how well organizational responses are meeting the demands and expectations of many organizational stakeholders (Wartick, 1992). Corporate reputation has been defined in different fields such as sociology, marketing, law, accountancy, economics, and business management (Shenkar & Yuchtman-Yaar, 1997). In light of the above extensive referenced literature, it can be said that corporate reputation is an accumulation of prestige of an organization that both creates and sustains long-term relationships with customers as well as gives the organization a substantive competitive advantage within its industry of operation. At the current stage in the study of corporate reputation, a definitive definition of the construct has yet to emerge in spite of numerous attempts to describe and integrate the definitions in use (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006). Our own review of the management literature benefits from those prior categorizations of definitions since they allow us to compare and contrast definitional frameworks and to observe central themes.

We see definitional themes emerging that describe three different conceptualizations of organizational reputation—being known (generalized awareness or visibility of the firm; prominence of the firm in the collective perception), being known for something (perceived predictability of organizational outcomes and behavior relevant to specific audience interests), and generalized favour ability (perceptions or judgments of the overall organization as good, attractive, and appropriate). We begin our review of definitions in use by describing each of these conceptualizations and noting articles in which they are employed in a unidimensional way. Pfarrer, Pollock, and Rindova (2010) refer to this dimension of corporate reputation as the result of judgments with respect to "the firm's demonstrated ability to create value." An organization's external observers have varying interests and therefore are attuned to different valued organizational outcomes. The perceptions of an organization's reputation by particular stakeholder groups such as environmental activists, shareholders, community members, and consumers may vary substantially. Standifird (2001) considers reputation in terms of an entity's expected behaviour in an exchange relationship. Depending on the exchange relationship that a particular constituency has with the organization, expectations for behaviour may differ. A problem for observers is that their ability to predict whether future firm outputs and behaviour will meet their needs is hampered because the internal workings of the firm are opaque and first-hand information about organizational capabilities and intentions is limited (Rindova *et al.*, 2005).

Community Recognition: Community recognition is the acknowledgement by a community or social group of a notable achievement. It is often followed by awards and celebrations, such as the He defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Thus, community recognition can be defined as a form of social capital. Recognition by community members, whether by subordinates, peers or superiors, is also part of motivation theory. The reward of an individual creates a positive feedback loop, inventing them, and others who are inspired by their deeds and by the positive reinforcement of the community, to continue contributing, or join in to build upon such efforts. Community as a concept has many meanings to different people. It is also being used in many different ways. Onyeozu (2007) perceive community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live in harmony, love and intimacy, sharing common social, economic and cultural characteristics. Onyenemezu (2008) views community to mean a social system where there is common life among people, having a geographical limit, sharing common socio-economic and cultural characteristics and having a feeling of oneness and sense of belonging which enables them to pursue common goal. Until a global organization competent to extend recognitions binding upon the world can be created, each state handles the question of recognition on the basis of national policy rather than international law. The principle of recognition can be traced back to the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, who asserted that the obligation of a state remains unmodified despite changes made by constitutional, revolutionary, and other means. Given the large number of states and the peaceful or forcible changes often made in them (regular elections or successor states in the first instance; accretion, prescription, conquest, occupation, and cession in the second), and the application of recognition to belligerency as well as to statehood, the question of recognition remains a constant in the conduct of international relations. All "new" states seek recognition from other states because recognition admits that a state has an international personality. All states have the legal duty to decide whether a "new" state meets certain conditions and therefore warrants being recognized. Does it have complete independence from parent and other states, exercise authority over a defined geographic area, enjoy the obedience of the great majority of its population, reveal willingness and ability to assume international obligations and duties?

Express recognition may be extended unilaterally in an explicit executive statement by one state or collectively following the agreement of several states. Recognition is implied if a state undertakes some sort of intercourse with another, as in concluding treaties with it or sending diplomatic representatives to it, without, however, having recognized it, thereby revealing at least intent to recognize it explicitly at a later time. A state's imposition of demands upon a community seeking recognition is a conditional type of recognition. Contingent recognition is generally reserved for acknowledgment by a parent state that a revolution against it has succeeded—indeed, it endorses the rupture.

Stakeholder Supports: A stakeholder is an individual, group or organization that's impacted by the outcome of a project or a business venture. Stakeholders have an interest in the success of the project and can be within or outside the organization that's sponsoring the project. Stakeholders are important because they can have a positive or negative influence on the project with their decisions. There are also critical or key stakeholders, whose support is needed for the project to exist. A stakeholder is a person, like any other member of the project, and some are easier to manage than others. You'll have to learn to use stakeholder mapping techniques to identify who your key stakeholders are and make sure you meet their requirements. A stakeholder is a person, group or organization with a vested interest, or stake, in the decision-making and activities of a business, organization or project. Stakeholders can be members of the organization they have a stake in, or they can have no official affiliation. Stakeholders can have a direct or indirect influence on the activities or projects of an organization. Their support is often required for business and project success. There is fair agreement on general thoughts as to who qualifies as potential or actual stakeholders, they include persons; neighbourhoods, institutions, groups, organisations, society, and the environment (Mitchell *et al*., 1997).

Freeman and Reed (1983) an individual or group who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives. Alkhafaji (1989) group to whom the corporation is responsible. Thomson, Wartic and Smith (1991) defined stakeholders as groups in relationship with an organization. Clarkson (1995) identifies stakeholders as "persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future". These claims stem from dealings with the firm or organisation activities, and stakeholders with similar interests can be grouped together (Clarkson, 1995). Mitchell *et al*. (1997) argue that definitions entailing relationships, contracts, or transactions need a give-and-take effect which is lacking in the "stake" concept of "can affect or is affected by" as seen in the Freeman (1984) definition. They further state that those who have no effect, or are not affected by the firm, have no stake. Hill and Jones (1992) define stakeholders as "constituents who have a legitimate claim on the firm", while Carroll (1993) states that by virtue of legitimacy; groups or individuals can be considered as stakeholders, of which the legitimacy could include power. Jenson (2001) interprets stakeholder theory as stating that managers should make decisions by accounting for the interests of all stakeholders in the organisation, and discusses whether or not organisations should maximize value. Mainardes *et al*. (2011) state that although the term "stakeholder" is widely used in business, media, and government, many who use the term lack the provision of evidence for their understanding of what a stakeholder actually is. They relate the concept to academic circles with many definitions proposed, yet there has never been a single definitive generally accepted definition. They do note that there are similarities within the definitions whereby organisations should consider the needs, interests, and influences of individuals or groups who affect, or can be impacted by, the organisations' decisions and actions.

Strategically, the concept of stakeholder management encourages firms to consider the impact on stakeholders through their actions and decision making (Fassin, 2012). The definition used as a guide for our study is by Freeman (1984) defining stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organizations objectives. Clarkson (1995) further addresses the importance of managers to create value for each stakeholder group to ensure the continued relationship and stakeholder retention. Mitchell *et al*. (1997) stated that these groups of stakeholders possess power that influences managerial decisions. Due to the contractual relationships firms have with primary stakeholders, they are highly visible: Choices, opportunities, decisions, and the valuation of their demands are required by firms (Hult *et al*., 2011). Fassin (2012) note that primary stakeholders enjoy a direct and contractual relationship with the firms.

METHODS

As a macro level descriptive research that adopted a cross sectional approach, the population of this study embraced 17 oil and gas Companies operating in Rivers State with 3 human resources managers derived from each organizations making the study respondents to be 51 using census approach. Thus the representative of the study is presented below:

Table 1: Respondents/Elements of the Population

S/N	Name	Human Resources
1	Green energy	3
2	Chevron	3
3	Total E & P	3
4	Mobil Producing	3
5	NAOC	3
6	Pan Ocean	3
7	SPDC	3
8	Aiteo	3
9	Newcross	3
10	Eroton	3
11	Seplat	3
12	Neconde	3
13	Belema	3
14	Moni Pulo	3
15	Total Upstream	3
16	Addax	3
17	SNEPCO	3
	Total	**51**

Source: Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Chambers 2023

The 4-point Likert scale of strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to scale the questionnaire with an assumed equal interval. Points were attached to the Likert scale as strongly agreed (5), Agreed (4) Disagreed (3), and Strongly Disagreed (1). The scale helped the researcher to know the extent of agreement or disagreement on each of the question on the questionnaire.

Table 2: Questionnaire Scaling of the Study

Options	Scale (Point)
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	4

Source: Research Desk, 2023

Inferentially, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tool was used to analyse the data from tested research questions. The respondents' responses were weighted and classified using the Dunn's classification method with a benchmark and any score that meets the mark is in agreement with the questionnaire. The higher above this bench mark score is the stronger the level of relationship. The lower values below this bench mark score is the stronger the level of non-relationship. It was used to establish the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables when the closeness of r to ± 1, the stronger the relationship between two variables, the r is nearer to zero the weaker the relationship. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient can assume any value from -1 (for perfect negative correlation) and +1 (for perfect positive correlation or relationship). A positive correlation coefficient means that the two variables are directly related. A negative correlation indicates that there is no pattern or predictive relationship between the behaviour of variables. The tests are carried out using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), and as two-tailed assessments (non-directional). All hypothetical statements are put forward at a 95% confidence interval; hence tests for correlations are anchored on a 0.05 level of significance where Probability values of $P < 0.05$ signify a significant relationship, which $P > 0.05$ signifies a non-significant relationship between the variables. In line with establishing the extent to which correlations could be considered as high or low, () interpretations of correlation (R) values are adopted as follows:

R = 0.00 - 0.19 (very weak correlation)
R = 0.20 - 0.39 (weak correlation)
R = 0.40 - 0.59 (moderate correlation)
R = 0.60 - 0.79 (high correlation)
R = 0.80 - 0.99 (very high correlation).

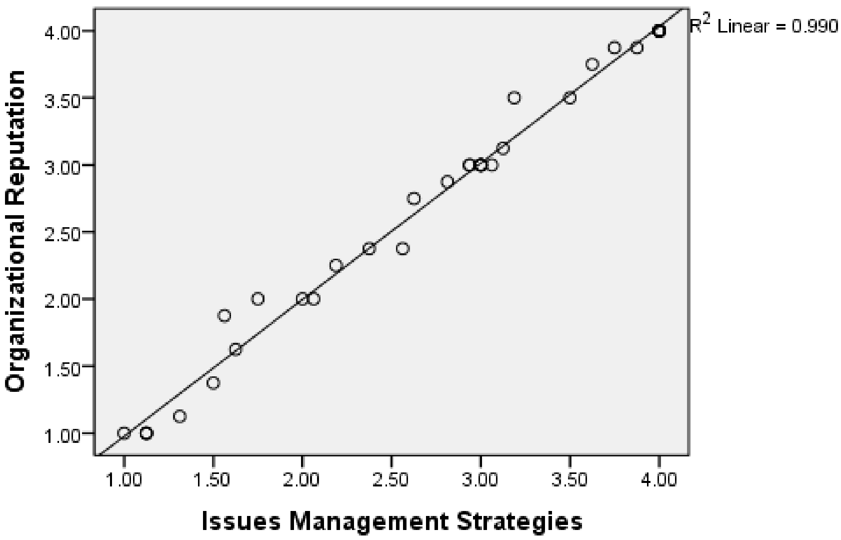

Table 3: Correlations Matrix for Issues Identification and Organizational Reputation

		Issues Identification	Community Recognition	Stakeholders Supports
Issues Identification	Pearson Correlation	1	.969**	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	41	41	41
Community Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.969**	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	41	41	41
Stakeholders Supports	Pearson Correlation	.961**	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	41	41	41

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presented on the table 3 is the result on the test for the correlation between issues identification and the measures of corporate reputation within the oil and gas Companies in

Rivers State. The test shows that issues identification significantly influences and leads to improved outcomes of community recognition (R = 0.969 and P = 0.000), and stakeholders support (R = 0.961 and P = 0.000). The relationship between issues identification and the measures of corporate reputation are observed to be significant and also positive. On this basis all null hypotheses are rejected.

Table 4: Correlations Matrix for Issues Response and Corporate Reputation

		Issues Response	Community Recognition	Stakeholders Supports
Issues Response	Pearson Correlation	1	.990**	.982**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	41	41	41
Community Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.990**	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	41	41	41
Stakeholders Supports	Pearson Correlation	.982**	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	41	41	41

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presented on the table 4 is the result on the test for the correlation between issues response and the measures of corporate reputation within the oil and gas Companies in Rivers State. The test shows that issues response significantly influences and leads to improved outcomes of community recognition (R = 0.990 and P = 0.000), and stakeholders support (R = 0.982 and P = 0.000). The relationship between issues response and the measures of corporate reputation are observed to be significant and also positive. On this basis all null hypotheses are rejected.

Table 5: Correlations Matrix for Issues Analysis and Corporate Reputation

		Issues Analysis	Community Recognition	Stakeholders Supports
Issues Analysis	Pearson Correlation	1	.972**	.981**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	41	41	41
Community Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.972**	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	41	41	41
Stakeholders Supports	Pearson Correlation	.981**	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	41	41	41

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presented on the table 5 is the result on the test for the correlation between issues analysis and the measures of corporate reputation within the oil and gas Companies in Rivers State.

The test shows that issues analysis significantly influences and leads to improved outcomes of community recognition (R = 0.972 and P = 0.000), and stakeholders support (R = 0.981 and P = 0.000). The relationship between issues analysis and the measures of corporate reputation are observed to be significant and also positive. On this basis all null hypotheses are rejected.

Table 6: Correlations Matrix for Issues Prioritization and Corporate Reputation

		Issues Prioritization	Community Recognition	Stakeholders Supports
Issues Prioritization	Pearson Correlation	1	.993**	993**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	41	41	41
Community Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.993**	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	41	41	41
Stakeholders Supports	Pearson Correlation	.993**	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	41	41	41

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presented on the table 6 is the result on the test for the correlation between issues prioritization and the measures of corporate reputation within the oil and gas Companies in Rivers State. The test shows that issues prioritization significantly influences and leads to improved outcomes of community recognition (R = 0.993 and P = 0.000), and stakeholders support (R = 0.993 and P = 0.000). The relationship between issues prioritization and the measures of corporate reputation are observed to be significant and also positive. On this basis all null hypotheses are rejected.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research identify the significance of the link between issues management strategies and corporate reputation. Specific evidence with regard to earlier stated objectives of the investigation are stated as follows:

1. Issues identification highly contributes toward the outcomes of corporate reputation, thus enhancing measures such as community recognition and stakeholders supports in oil and gas companies in Rivers State.
2. Issues response strongly and positively impacts the outcomes of corporate reputation, thus enhancing measures such as community recognition and stakeholders supports in oil and gas companies in Rivers State.
3. Issues analysis highly contributes toward the outcomes of corporate reputation, thus enhancing measures such as community recognition and stakeholders support in oil and gas companies in Rivers State.
4. Issues prioritization highly contributes toward the outcomes of corporate reputation, thus enhancing measures such as community recognition and stakeholders support in oil and gas companies in Rivers State.
5. Organizational culture significantly moderates the relationship between electronic management system and employee efficiency in public organizations in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

In line with the evidence and findings generated in this study, the following conclusions are put forward:

The study demonstrates a significant relationship between issues identification and organizational reputation in oil and gas companies in Rivers State. These results highlight the importance of implementing effective issues identification measures to enhance overall organizational reputation through community recognition and stakeholders support measures of corporate reputation.

This study provides compelling evidence of a significant relationship between issues response and corporate reputation in oil and gas companies in Rivers State. These finding highlight the critical role of issues response in the organization operations through community recognition and stakeholders support.

The study demonstrates a significant relationship between issues analysis and corporate reputation in oil and gas companies in in Rivers State. These results emphasize the critical role of effective issues analysis as it enhances overall performance of oil and gas companies operations.

The study findings also show significant positive relationship between issues prioritization and corporate reputation in oil and gas companies in Rivers State. The results reassure that issues prioritization is a good form in managing issues in the oil and gas companies with host communities and stakeholders support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusion of our study, the following recommendations are made:

i) Issues identification should be encouraged and utilized as a management strategy avert the constant issue between oil companies and communities and stakeholders as the study showed that it enhances corporate reputation.

ii) Issues response still remains essential strategy for oil and gas companies to utilize in dealing issues when they arise as it is seem from this empirical finding that, there is a significant positive relationship between issues management strategies and corporate reputation.

iii) Issues analysis should be adopted by oil and gas companies management in dealing with communities as it enhances corporate reputation.

iv) Issues prioritization is a good strategy in recognizing communities and stakeholders as to avoid issues escalating into conflict; hence the significant positive relationship between issues prioritization and corporate reputation of community recognition and stakeholders support.

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