

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION IN THE MINING
INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF NEWMONT GOLDEN RIDGE LIMITED**



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**ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION IN THE MINING
INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF NEWMONT GOLDEN RIDGE LIMITED**

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**A Dissertation in the Department of Communication and Media Studies, Faculty of
Foreign Languages Education and Communication, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment Of the requirements for the award of the
degree of Master Of Arts**

(Communication And Media Studies [Business Communication])

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JULY, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Belinda Frimpong, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: .. 

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: PROF. ANDY OFORI-BIRIKORANG

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this work to God almighty for his love and protection over me throughout the beginning and end of this program.

To my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Frimpong who taught me to be strong and passionate about anything there is to life

And to my husband, Major Yaw Dramani Yakubu for constantly reminding me of the inherent potential in me which needs to be harnessed with efforts.



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ABSTRACT

Mining companies depend on the approval of influential stakeholders in the environments where they operate, hence the need to demonstrate that they are sustainable. This study investigated the sustainability communication practices of Newmont Ghana. It specifically examined how the company is incorporating sustainability communication into its operations and how the sustainability communication practices of the company meet the expectations of stakeholders. It also examined the sustainability communication challenges of the company and proffered measures for improving same. A single case study design was adopted for this study which allowed the researcher to combine in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to primarily gather data from the purposively sampled staff of Newmont and opinion leaders of the Akyem communities. The thematic data analysis technique was used, and it was found out that Newmont incorporates sustainability communication in its operations. The sustainability communication activities of the company take the form of community engagement, knowledge sharing, government relations and the publication of an annual sustainability report. The opinion leaders had mixed views about the extent to which Newmont meets the sustainability communication expectations of community members. It was further realized that the company faced a major challenge of how to develop communication materials that provide diverse stakeholders with the messages at the right time. The study concludes that there is a need to balance sustainability communication in a manner that reflects the core business of a company but also fits into stakeholders' expectations. It recommends that Newmont invests more in community research and engagement to better understand stakeholders' interests, information needs and communication channel preferences.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Corporations are under increased pressure from internal and external stakeholders, to measure and report more on their social and environmental performance. For mining companies, this pressure is even intense as they work directly with the most vulnerable populations and can dramatically alter the natural surroundings in the places they operate (Lins & Horwitz, 2007).

Mining profoundly affects the environment and significantly affects the socio-economic patterns of affected communities and regions. For many years the impacts of mining have been 'accepted' by societies because of the economic benefits, but growing concern for the environment and the apparent social impact of mining in affected communities is pushing up demand for sustainable mining (Fonseca, 2010).

Without sound sustainability practices, mining companies can jeopardize their own viability in the long run. Sustainability from the organisational perspective is tied to sustainable development which the Brundtland Commission of 1978 defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002).

Implementing sustainability is systemic, it involves input from several parts of the corporate systems such as legal, research and development, quality management, human resources, and communication management (Signitzer & Prexl, 2008). This research focuses on the

communication management aspect of sustainability which is also known as corporate sustainability communication or corporate sustainability communication.

Defined as corporate communications about sustainability issues (Signitzer & Prexl, 2008), corporate sustainability communication has become a vital part of staying competitive, partly because it helps to satisfy stakeholders' expectations (Gardiner et al., 2003) and it is profitable in the long run. Organizations maximize value creation when they adopt sustainability communication. This may be manifested in reputation, corporate image and financial performance enhancement.

As a form of strategic corporate communication, sustainability communication helps companies to engage with and understand the needs of various stakeholders including clients, employees, market analysts, local authorities, trade unions, and the media (Bibri, 2008). It fosters and nurtures trust and commitment but also creates opportunities for continuous dialogue that helps relationships between a company and its stakeholders to grow and flourish.

The importance of sustainability communication is growing constantly as companies increasingly see it as business critical and stakeholder expectations become stronger. Sustainability communication is an important aspect of a company's sustainable business operations because it needs to follow stakeholder expectations and to report about its sustainability performance (Amran & Ooi, 2014).

Freeman (1984) defined stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives. To cater to diverse stakeholder needs and achieve sustainable development, it is important that businesses meet stakeholder

expectations by engaging with targeted stakeholders and obtaining meaningful feedback on their sustainability communication practices (Amran & Ooi, 2014).

Many companies are committing to sustainability reporting which is basically a report on business performance against environmental and social sustainability goals. This is a one-way communication that only seeks to disseminate information from companies to their stakeholders without substantial opportunity for feedback and continuous engagement (Clarkson, Richardson & Vasvari, 2008). Through sustainability reporting, businesses are able to show stakeholders that they are effective in meeting their own sustainability goals, future business growth and long-term success, but it limits stakeholders opportunities to participate in how sustainability goals are met following its one sided nature.

Sustainability communication goes beyond information dissemination to actual engagement with stakeholders. It educates stakeholders and capacitates them to make more informed assessments about the ability of a company to create and sustain value. Well-informed stakeholders are less likely to develop negative perceptions of business operations, which helps to maintain the image and legitimacy of the business (Genc, 2017).

Given the importance of sustainability communication practices, some countries have mandated that businesses disclose their social, economic and environmental impacts. In Ghana sustainability communication is not only voluntary, but also low (Welbeck, Owusu, Bekoe & Kusi, 2017). Although mining companies in Ghana tend to engage more in sustainability communication than companies in less environmentally sensitive sectors, mining companies are complacent (Arthur, Wu, Yago & Zhang, 2017), limiting their ability to meet the needs of their multiple stakeholders. This thesis aims at assessing sustainability

communication practices in Ghana's mining industry by focusing on Newmont Ghana limited, it also explores how these practices meet the expectations of local stakeholders.

1.2 Problem Statement

As pressure for sustainable business practices in the mining industry continues to rise, sustainability communications can play a strategic role in ensuring that mining companies communicate efforts to undertake their activities in a more sustainable manner (Skoldeberg, Nyan, Kupcu & Cable, 2014). However, mining companies experience tensions from what to communicate and how to communicate to their multiple stakeholders, the potential of existing sustainability communication practices of mining companies in meeting the expectations of local stakeholders is also less understood.

Sustainability communication is a form of strategic communication, it is purposeful and well-targeted as it seeks to provide information and education about various issues relating to environmental, economic and social impact of business activities (Genc, 2017). It mirrors the society oriented view of Public Relations (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2005). Signitzer and Prexl (2008) contend that, although large multinationals tend to be more conscious about sustainability and employ Public Relations practices such as dialogue with stakeholders, educational campaigns and informational activities, these must be situationally specific and suited to the local context in order to be effective.

The mining industry encounters many difficulties from being a highly regulated global industry, hence, mining companies must demonstrate high commitment to sustainability communication as a means of averting conflicts and litigations with local stakeholders (Genc, 2017; Lins, Althoff & Meek, 2018). Notwithstanding, the sustainable communication practices of mining companies do not give a clear picture of how

sustainability strategies are incorporated into their environmental, social and economic actions (Lins, Althoff & Meek, 2018).

Also, although international frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) exist to guide best practice in developing sustainable development framework, sustainability communication is voluntary and it is far more nuanced (Sobhani, Amran & Zainuddin, 2009). Again, mining companies experience tensions from what to communicate and what not to communicate because of the reputational risk of negative communication (Nilsson, Sandstrom & Lind, 2013). In Ghana, large mining companies are selective and complacent in sustainability communication, the manner in which sustainability is communicated also does not make the messages understandable and accessible to all stakeholders (Arthur, Wu, Yago & Zhang, 2017).

It is apparent from the earlier studies (Arthur et al., 2017; Genc, 2017; Lins, Althoff & Meek, 2018) that mining companies communicate or report on sustainability in some form, but they are under no obligation to do this, and they adopt different approaches amid tensions how and what to communicate. Previous works on sustainability in mining have focused on the technical reporting on sustainability with less emphasis on how sustainability issues are communicated to local stakeholders who are most directly affected by the social, economic and environmental impact of mining activities. In addition, there is scant information on the mechanisms of sustainability communication employed by mining companies in Ghana and these meet stakeholders' expectations.

Stemming from this, the aim of this case study is to examine the sustainability communication practices of a major mining company in Ghana, Newmont Ghana but also

how these practices meet local stakeholders' expectations of deeper and wider range of information.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

- i. Describe how Newmont Ghana is incorporating sustainability communication into their operations.
- ii. Examine how the sustainability communication practices of Newmont Ghana meets the expectations of stakeholders.
- iii. Investigate the challenges Newmont Ghana encounters during sustainability communication in the mining industry.
- iv. Proffer measures for improving sustainability communication at Newmont Ghana.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research questions;

- i. How is Newmont Ghana incorporating sustainability communication into its operations?
- ii. How do the sustainability communication practices of Newmont Ghana meet the expectations of their stakeholders?
- iii. What challenges do Newmont Ghana encounter in sustainability communication during the mining industry?
- iv. What measures can be adopted for more effective sustainability communication at Newmont Ghana?

1.5 Relevance of the Study

This study investigates sustainability communication practices of Newmont Ghana. The outcomes of this study are significant to mining companies and the Ghana Chamber of Mines, it also has policy implications for the Government of Ghana. The findings of the study would shed more light on the sustainability performance of the selected mining company and how these are communicated to stakeholders.

The outcomes of this study are also beneficial for deepening understanding of how strategic communication is used in support of sustainability efforts in the mining industry. Related to this, it also demonstrates how major mining companies in Ghana are integrating communication into their sustainability performances.

Also, the study is relevant as it presents an opportunity for a retrospective perspective on sustainability communication in Ghana and local stakeholders' appreciation of existing practices. This further reveals the complex socio-cultural dynamics and the challenges encountered by mining companies in sustainability communication.

In addition, the Government of Ghana and the Ghana Chamber of Mines could learn from the findings about the current status of sustainability reporting and consequently formulate policies and regulations which would encourage the mining industry in moving forward in the adoption of more effective sustainability communication mechanisms.

Furthermore, the behaviour of large mining companies has long been challenged as unsustainable. The research addresses the information needs of decision-makers (public and private) in the area of transparency and accountability in the mining industry. Lastly, the outcome of the study would add to extant literature on sustainability communication, it could also be a basis for further research in the field.

1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study

This investigation of sustainability communication in the mining industry is delimited to a major mining company because sustainability communication is more common to large mining concessions. Also, besides the officials of the selected company, participation in this study is confined to the local people located in close proximity of Newmont's Akyem operation. Regarding methodology, the study is a single case study which limits the generalizability of findings but also make it opportune to investigate the issues in details from different perspectives.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

This research report is organised into five interrelated chapters. The first chapter presents a general introduction to the study. This includes the background to the study, the research problem, research objectives and research questions. Chapter two contains a review of empirical and theoretical literature. The next chapter provides details about the methodology employed for the study. The research design, sampling frame, data collection techniques and data analysis procedure are contained in this third chapter. The fourth chapter focuses on the findings and analysis of results, and the final chapter presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a review of journal articles, books and other relevant publications on sustainability communication in the mining industry. The review of literature is thematic and covers captures various topics such as; corporate sustainability, sustainability communication practices, sustainability communication challenges and strategies for improving sustainability communication. The chapter also contains the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

2.2 Corporate Sustainability

Since the end of the 1990s, corporate sustainability has become a growing interest theme in business and academia. Nevertheless, the corporate sustainability field is still evolving and hence different approaches have been used to define, measure and theorize corporate sustainability. Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) define corporate sustainability as meeting the needs of a corporation's current direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well. D'Amboise and Lisi (2016) also define corporate sustainability simply as meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders. Similarly. Both definitions approach the concept from a sustainable development perspective.

Corporate sustainability is also a business approach designed to shape the environmental, social, and economic effects of a company. As a business approach, corporate sustainability first, results in the sustainable development of the company and, second, provides an

important contribution toward the sustainable development of the economy and society (Schaltegger, Burritt & Petersen, 2003). In this light, corporate sustainability is a combination of economic success, environmental protection and social responsibility. The implementation of corporate sustainability can support long-term business success as well as contribute to improving living standards (Aras & Crowther, 2009).

Corporate sustainability has evolved over the years to its current state as a business approach. Faced with pressures from society to be mindful of the impact of their activities, firms began engaging in window dressing activities by changing the wording of their reports to reflect CSR language without substance. This is the first of five stages in the lead up to the maturity of corporate sustainability. The second stage involved organisations moving on to cost containment whereby firms reengineer business process to reduce consumption of water and energy that reduce costs and improve financial performance (Schaltegger, Burritt & Petersen, 2003).

Stakeholder engagement is the third stage, once here, firms became more concerned about employee and customer satisfaction. The fourth stage consisted of communicating about these initiatives (reduce consumption of water and energy) by developing CSR reports. The fifth stage is the sustainability, which implies making radical changes to business practice and a significant amount of process re-engineering (Schaltegger, Burritt & Petersen, 2003)

Aras and Crowther (2009) take the view that corporate sustainability at its core addresses and captures the most important concerns of the public regarding business and society relationships. The need for sustainability is strongly felt in the mining and other extractive industries. Some stakeholders, such as political and social agents, are demanding mining operations that are more eco-friendly. Other stakeholders, such as customers and employees

are demanding business behaviours and activities that are more sustainable (labour safety, salaries, reduced ecological footprint).

Joshi and Li (2016) assert that to ensure long-term financial success, businesses need to recognize that they are operating within a larger biophysical and social environment, and respect the limits and processes governing the sustainability of the larger ecosystem as the global economy expands rapidly towards the carrying capacity of the planet. Consequently, firms, especially the large multinational corporations, are being challenged to behave in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsive manner while maintaining and improving shareholder value.

The benefits of corporate sustainability are numerous, this includes the potential for cost reduction, the use of sustainability as a sales and marketing aid, and the potential for sustainability to generate a competitive advantage (Cho, Guidry, Hageman & Patten, 2012). It is important in the implementation process that companies continue to focus on their core strengths. That is, in order to ensure that corporate sustainability is successful, companies need to make the implementation process compatible with their corporate strategy (Cho, Guidry, Hageman & Patten, 2012)

Companies are also paying increasing attention to sustainability issues because stakeholders are soliciting information on the environmental, social impacts, business operations and measures to benchmark corporate social and environmental performance in different industrial contexts (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). Increasingly, investors also demanding disclosure of material environmental risks and related compliance costs and liabilities. These developments further underscore the need for corporations to communicate their sustainability activities clearly and consistently.

One key aspect of corporate sustainability is its communication. Reporting corporate sustainability is not only essential for business to let stakeholders know the activities of the business, but it is also a vital management and communication practice with implications for overall business success, especially in the heavily regulated mining industry (Bhimani, Silvola & Sivabalan, 2016). For Bhimani, Silvola and Sivabalan (2016) sustainability implementation is incomplete without sustainability communication.

2.3 Corporate Sustainability Communication

The implementation of sustainability at the corporate level should guarantee long-term success and requires not only support of top management, but also networking of several other parts of the corporate systems. Signitzer and Prexl (2007) note that communication has a special role in this framework of sustainability implementation and reporting. Signitzer and Prexl (2007) defined corporate sustainability communication as an evolving concept which refers to corporate communications about sustainability issues; environmental, economic and social.

The term sustainability communication also refers to all types of corporate and marketing communications about sustainability issues. Sustainability communication is however more than sender-oriented communication to persuade others. It includes processes of dialogue and discourse and the normative aspect of sustainable development (Siano, Conte, Amabile, Vollero & Piciocchi, 2016). In this perspective, corporate sustainability becomes a narrative construct in which the discourse serves to frame and perform specified sustainable actions.

Corporate sustainability communication (CSC) is an outgrowth and advancement of the corporate social reports and environmental communication programs of the 1970s and 1980s. During that period, environmental scandals such as the chemical catastrophes in

Bhopal, India 1984 and in Seveso, Italy 1976 sensitized the general public on the dangers of business operations (Cerin & Dobers, 2001).

Corporations responded to societal pressure in the 1970s and 1980s by reporting on their sustainability initiatives in a manner that was advertorial or purely marketing oriented. Companies reacted to environmental communication programs with mainly crisis communication and one-way reporting strategies that sought to promote their environmental success stories. Many during this period published so-called social reports to demonstrate socially responsible behaviour. However, most of the reports were used as advertising instruments lacking honesty and transparency.

There are still companies that engage in communications about sustainability issues for marketing, business, and/or societal reasons. This conduct roughly corresponds with the differentiated approaches to the practice and research of public relations. In practice, organisations approach public relations from organizational, marketing, and societal perspectives (Signitzer, 2007).

The extension of sustainability from the business management approach to the public relations field is one of the marked features of the sustainability communication evolution since the 1970s. However, although business executives overwhelmingly express positive perceptions about sustainability initiatives they are adamantly opposed public relations' ownership of the programs. Noting this, Reeves (2016) advocated a cross-functional approach with public relations in a supportive or complementary function in sustainability issues. Notwithstanding, the linkages between recent theoretical approaches to public relations and the concept of corporate sustainability communications not in dispute.

Taken together, Corporate Sustainability Communication (CSC) is communicative function. It forms part of an organisation's strategic communication activities. From an organizational perspective, if a company focuses CSC, it is because of the contribution of CSC to the goal achievement of sustainability management. Sustainability communication is an area of public relations and can improve the organization's image (Kolk, 2003). CSC can also enhance trust and credibility among stakeholders by positioning the company as a sustainable organization with sustainable products.

2.4 Public Relations, Sustainability Communication and Corporate Social

Responsibility

Public Relations (PR) has almost become a misnomer as the practice is maligned as a purveyor of 'greenwash', gimmicks and spin schemes to make companies look good even if they go wrong (Last, 2013). This notwithstanding, public relations is an important aspect strategic communication in the organisational setting. Strategic communication in this context means purposeful communication to advance a company's mission (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2016).

Like public relations, sustainability communication is also deliberate communication practice and hence it is strategic. It may be described as the strategic communication of sustainability. However, sustainability communication is often placed under public relations as public relations is much broader (Last, 2013).

Corporate Sustainability Communication is also subsumed by public relations because as a form of strategic communication, public relations is a pre-requisite and an instrument of effective policy making and public participation: from formulating a vision, negotiating and decision making, developing and implementing plans to monitoring impacts. Public relation

serves information exchange, establishing consensus among divergent opinions and interests, and facilitates the building of know-how, decision making and action capacities at the heart of the delicate cooperation between government, civil society groups and the private sector (Hallahan, et al., 2016).

Signitzer and Prexl (2007) note that corporate sustainability communication (CSC) as a relatively new dimension of public relations poses new challenges for communication researchers and practitioners. However, corporate sustainability communication neatly ties into Van Ruler and Vercic's (2005) approach to public relations as being reflective. In this role, CSC is supposed to provide legitimacy for organisations in society by making sure that the society's interest are factored in to the sustainability management of the company.

Closely associated with corporate sustainability communication (CSC) is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Researchers and practitioners often treat CSC and CSR as being nearly synonymous. This is a common misunderstanding since these two concepts have different backgrounds and different theoretical paths (Przychodzen & Przychodzen, 2013). However, the conflation of the two concepts is largely because even though CSR and CSC have evolved from different histories, they are pushing toward a common future. They both share the same vision, which aims to balance economic responsibilities with social and environmental ones (Montiel, 2008).

The concept of CSR encapsulates a wide range of issues involved in the relationship between a firm's actions and those affected by them. CSR focuses on the responsible management practices a company has committed to, its main targets are regulators, customers, and advocates (Murray, Haynes, & Hudson, 2010). CSR is limited to socio-environmental aspects of business activities, meaning that CSR commitment contributes

only partly to sustainable development. On the other hand, CSC can be seen as a transfer of the overall idea of sustainable development to the business level. Sustainability involves the entire value chain of company and hence is managed at the intersection of marketing, operations and public relations. This implies that sustainability communication is significantly multi-dimensional and broader than social responsibility (Przychodzen & Przychodzen, 2013).

Presently, societal views on public relations apparently are being rediscovered following a realisation of the societal role of public relations and the emphasis on society-oriented view of communication management. This development has further blurred the distinction between corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability communication. However, Signitzer and Prexl (2007) opined that corporate sustainability communication should not be regarded as an additional program area of public relations, but as the integration of sustainability issues into existing program areas.

2.5 Corporate Sustainability Practices in the Mining Industry

Sustainability communication has become a global best practice in the mining industry. Failure to adequately live up to societal expectations is now considered a significant threat to the viability of the mining industry. However, sustainability communication in the mining industry sometimes does not go beyond mere reporting and nonfinancial disclosures of the impact of mining operations (Bohling, Murguia & Godfrid, 2017). Sustainability communication as a result is symbolic, but also performative.

Mining companies depend on the approval of influential stakeholders in the global and local environments where they operate, and they want to be seen as sustainable, decent, and worthy of trust. A sustainable business approach cannot be implemented without effective

communication that aims at sharing sustainability values with stakeholders. As a matter of fact, corporate sustainability is increasingly becoming both a corporate value and an integrative part of the business strategy in many companies.

In an overview of how and what mining companies communicate in the area of sustainability, Nilsson, Sandstrom and Lind (2013) find similarities in the sustainability communication of mining companies. This similarity stems from the fact that many of these companies have similar environmental reporting standards based on industry trends or other international commitments. However, there are also nuances in the reporting styles and these emanate from relevant factors such as the geographical location or where each company operates, the size of the company and the ownership structure.

Most mining companies emphasise in sustainability communication their commitment to 'communities' and the responsible manner in which they operate. Mining companies also try to differentiate between their environmental impact and social impact although these different themes are not highlighted equally in sustainability communication activities, especially on corporate websites (Nilsson, Sandstrom and Lind, 2013). There also seems to be apparent tension between financial reporting and sustainability communication as often mining companies report on the amounts invested in sustainability and their own viability rather than the sustainable nature of their operations (Nilsson, Sandstrom and Lind, 2013).

In Europe and America, organisational surveys reveal that more and more companies, especially those listed on the stock exchange have integrated sustainability issues into their mission statements (von Rosen, 2003). These companies also have concrete goals concerning sustainability and provide an organizational structure for its implementation. Many of these companies engage in Corporate Sustainability Communication in pursuit of

enhanced reputation, competitive advantage and in response to customer demand, industry trend or board commitment (von Rosen, 2003).

Siano et al, (2016) observe that the growing interest in sustainability issues has led organizations to adopt appropriate channels both to communicate their commitment and to engage with their stakeholders, especially in an online context. Among the online tools that are most commonly used by organizations, a crucial role is played by the corporate website because it enables a more direct and immediate presentation of corporate statements and sustainability initiatives.

Digital environments are progressively playing a crucial role in the sustainability communication of organizations in many different industries. Increasingly more often, the websites of large companies present wide sections dedicated to corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues to communicate their commitment to corporate sustainability to stakeholders (Capriotti, 2011). In particular, corporate websites have become effective communication channels for disclosing sustainability information and for improving exchanges with stakeholders. These web-based interactions and conversations are able to directly influence stakeholders' interest and their engagement in social and environmental corporate performances (Dade & Hassenzah, 2012).

The communication channels for sustainability communication can be categorised into those that are under the control of the company itself such as reporting, website, PR, packaging and advertising, and also those that are not directly controlled by the company such as media (including social media), what customers or employees say, and NGOs (Du et al. 2010). Messages through channels that are not controlled by a company are perceived to be more credible than those messages communicated directly by a company itself. This is

because messages coming from channels that are not under the control of the company come across as ‘independent voice’.

Broadly, public relations has an important role in communicating sustainability. As one of the goals of PR is to engage with organisational stakeholders, PR can bring about sustainable development through strategic communication about sustainability (Last, 2013).

However, in order to effectively influence public opinion and communicate with sustainability conscious publics, public relations practitioners will require greater knowledge and understanding of the attitudes and communication behaviour of these publics (Major, 1993).

Apparently, the sustainability communication activities of mining companies is heavily skewed as disproportionate attention is given to ‘elite’ stakeholders who can access digital media (websites, social media) platforms for sustainability information. Earlier studies have not concerned themselves with how sustainability communication is effected at the grassroots with local communities who are immediately affected by the activities of the mining companies.

2.6 Stakeholder Management and Sustainability Communication

There is considerable contention over what the term stakeholder actually means. The concept has its origin in business science literature. It was introduced in 1963 to generalize and expand the notion of the shareholders as the only group that a company’s management needed to be sensitive towards. In one of the seminal texts on the concept, Freeman (1984) defined stakeholder as any group or individual that can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation’s objectives. Kaler, (2002) also defined stakeholder as any

individual or group that maintains a stake in an organisation in the way that a shareholder possesses shares.

Freeman's definition of stakeholder is more widely used and accepted. Fasin (2013) explains, this is because Freeman's definition is more precise and reflects on the role of shareholders as contributors and influencers. Based on the definition, the stakeholders of a company include its customers, employees, suppliers, governments, competitors, special interest groups (consumer advocates, environmentalists) and the media among others.

Stakeholder engagement aims to build and maintain an open and constructive relationship with stakeholders and thereby facilitate and enhance a company's or a project's management of its operations, including its environmental and social effects and risks. Mine operations are increasingly being managed as projects as they have a start date and end date but also definitive scope. In this light, actively managing stakeholders increases the likelihood that mining projects will not veer off track due to unresolved stakeholder issues. This also enhances the ability of persons to operate synergistically, and limits disruptions during project implementation (PMI, 2004)

Irawan, Sumarwan, Suharjo and Djohar (2014) identified seven major stakeholders in the mining industry; central government, local government, local communities, small scale mining and suppliers, manufacturers and investors as well as law enforcement agencies. Under certain circumstances stakeholders have a positive sense and in other situations they can have negative expectations about the company. Appropriate stakeholder management by a company has good implications for the sustainability of the company.

Investigations of stakeholder perceptions and expectations of mining companies revealed despite the recognition of mining as a normalised part of the modern economy in many

countries, local communities have low involvement in the activities of mining companies. Local communities also have negative perceptions of their own involvement thus far with mining companies (Plank, Walsh & Behrens, 2016). These perceptions translate into negative future expectations.

Low trust can undermine stakeholder and business relationships, reduce the organization's legitimacy, and limit access to resources. Whereas interpersonal trust is the willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to another, stakeholder trust is the willingness of a stakeholder to be vulnerable to a business (Pirson & Malhotra, 2011). Stakeholder trust is socially embedded in relationships, contexts, and structures of networks. Stakeholders are also increasingly interconnected and hence negative expectations of one stakeholder could cause a spiral effect among others (Crane, 2018).

Stakeholder expectations and local attitudes are shaped by complex interactions of positive and negative factors, influenced by both mining company and government attempts at sustainable development and relations-building (Zhang & Moffat, 2015). Mining can affect almost all activities in a community; not just those stakeholders directly impacted by the mine. Potential environmental impacts, such as effects on terrestrial and aquatic systems, play a key role in shaping negative community perceptions towards mining projects, with community benefits and impacts on lifestyle exerting less influence (Zhang & Moffat, 2015).

Baker (2006) explained that in today's business environment, it is critical that stakeholder expectations be consistently and frequently managed, to ensure successful business outcome. Unmet stakeholder expectations may ultimately cause a mining company its

license to operate, it can also fester altercations between a mining company and the local community or advocacy groups.

2.7 Challenges of Sustainability Communication

Sustainability communication is a challenging undertaking not because it involves strategic planning and execution but rather due to the multiple stakeholders involved. Irawan et al., (2016) explain that in the developing world especially, mining companies operate in a very complex business environment where substantial stakeholder ambiguity must be managed. Stakeholder ambiguity occurs when stakeholders interpret company actions or information they receive in different ways depending on their individual goals, demands, and opinions (Irawan et al., 2016).

Also, from vendors to investors to customers, mining companies generally have a wide variety of stakeholders, sometimes with competing agenda. When trying to meet stakeholder communication needs, companies not only face the increasingly difficult task of appeasing these different groups, but also managing competing timelines. Executives and their communication experts often find themselves balancing the short-term demands of some stakeholders with long-term planning for growth (Pellinen, 2016).

In addition, differing stakeholder groups have varying expectations from the company's sustainability activities and they also have different demands for the kinds of information they want to receive and the channels through which they want to receive the information (Du et al., 2010). For mining companies that have many stakeholder groups the challenge is to answer to all of the stakeholder demands in sustainability communication and to choose whom to prioritize. This is crucial as the sustainability communication issues the stakeholders know and are aware of gain better stakeholder support (Du et al., 2010).

Further, although it is important for stakeholders to ensure that sustainability communication fits into the businesses strategy of the mining company, there are instances where the issues important to stakeholders are not relevant for the core business and the challenge becomes how to communicate to stakeholders that the issues are not of interest to the company. The challenge of making sustainability communication fitting to specific stakeholders expectations and to the core business of a company can result in conflict when not handled well (Dawkins 2004).

Also, there is the issue of showing the business case of sustainability communication, especially how it helps the company economically, showing proof for the impacts of the sustainability communication on organisational benchmarks. Different companies employ different indicators, cases, goals, trends and other detailed information (Pellinen, 2016). This is more of facing internal stakeholders and satisfying the expectations of sustainability communication and its impact on the business activities of the company.

Another challenge for sustainability communication is the tendency of some stakeholders to misconstrue such activities as marketing drives and publicity stunts. The credibility of sustainability communication is lowered when it is viewed as marketing or sheer publicity, this defeats the purpose of the entire process (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014). Stakeholders with expert interest in sustainability communication want to see some standards such as Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) used in reporting and showing the integrated and strategic approach to sustainability communication (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014).

Again, for large multinational mining companies a communication challenge is presented in the balancing of global, whole corporation level presentation and sustainability issues

related to that level and local impacts and response to the local issues (Pellinen, 2016). The balancing of interest impact the content of sustainability communication, the channel for the communication and also how it is interpreted by stakeholders.

In addition, the packaging of sustainability communication also presents another challenge. The length of sustainability reports is a problem when competing for stakeholders' attention (Dawkins 2004). This means that finding creative communication ways that catch attention and are easily understandable are a competitive advantage especially since not every target group is interested in looking for this information and reading sustainability reports.

2.8 Improving Sustainability Communication in the Mining Industry

Siano et al (2016) indicate that to improve sustainability communication in the mining industry, organisations need to understand how to communicate sustainability performance in a credible way across multiple channels. Related to that, mining companies must also commit to planning and integrating sustainability communications into business activities. To be able to participate in an informed manner, stakeholders should receive the information they need when they need it and in a format and a language that is accessible. It is the responsibility of the mining company to ensure that all impediments such as language and access are removed as much as possible to ensure that stakeholders can communicate freely with the company.

Sustainability communication must also be strategic and systematic. A well-managed sustainability communications system is one that relies on robust, quality data and clear sustainability goals based on a sustainability strategy. By having effective systems in place it is possible to develop a coherent sustainability communications strategy that will enhance your corporate reputation (Bohling & Murgui, 2014). To communicate strategically and to

respond properly to stakeholder demands mining companies must also have in place robust, resilient and highly organised sustainability communications system, based on a credible sustainability strategy.

Again, for best outcomes, sustainability communication must be initiated early and must continue through project completion. Effective stakeholder engagement begins during project design and continues for the life of the project. Building a strong relationship from the start can help develop support for the mining project and the company behind it (Siano, 2016). Information exchange during the design phase can help organizations avoid costly mistakes that are difficult to fix at a later stage.

A broad array of terms have been used to describe sustainability communication and there are many approaches to doing this such as direct stakeholders, including consultation, external relations, information disclosure and dissemination, and participation. In spite of these, the best approach is one that is transparent and honest. A mining company's interaction with stakeholders must hence be characterized by transparency and honesty, and build trust in the process (Crane, 2018).

Additionally, it is important to manage stakeholder communication as a business function. Communication with stakeholders should be driven by a well-defined strategy and must have a clear set of objectives, timetable, budget, and allocation of responsibilities. Companies that take a systematic approach to sustainability communication grounded in business operations get better results from their time and resources, and can more effectively track and manage stakeholder issues and risks. The systematic approach includes researching stakeholders to know their interest, information needs and communication channel preferences (Bohling & Murgui, 2014).

Further, sustainability communication must be inclusive, culturally appropriate and accessible. Inclusiveness implies that efforts are made to include highly visible stakeholders as well as those that are typically underrepresented, such as minority groups, women, youth, and vulnerable people in the community. Related to this, it is essential that the communication takes place in a format, language, and location accessible and comprehensible to all stakeholders (Irawan, 2014; Siano et al., 2016).

Sustainability communication is bound to have loose ends and challenges given the complexity of some of the information and the web of stakeholders that are involved. In the light of this, it is important for sustainability communication to be proactive (Pellinen, 2016). Mining companies must plan ahead and identify stakeholders and their concerns. They must not only disseminate information but also solicit feedback before problems arise. Again, when grievances are brought to the attention sustainable companies, they must be managed effectively. Effective sustainability communication includes using a procedure to ensure that grievances are received and responded to in a timely manner, and are tracked so that results can be analysed (Pellinen, 2016).

Lastly, it is absolutely necessary for mining companies to adopt best information disclosure practices. Crane (2018) takes the view that to the extent possible, companies should be open about their activities; in short, “tell it like it is.” Companies that share objective information of importance to stakeholders are more likely to be considered trustworthy. There are almost unlimited methods of disclosing information, including radio programs, posters, meetings, theatre, videos, consultation forums, puppet shows, comic books, expert presentations, participatory monitoring, and mock-ups. Proactive mining companies can identify innovative means of information disclosure that target their stakeholders.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of the study is Freeman's stakeholder theory and the Grunig's situational theory of the publics. Both are public relations theories that can be applied severally to explain the relationship and interdependence between organisations and various societal constituents.

2.9.1 Stakeholder Theory

Over the last three decades the stakeholder theory has emerged as a suitable theory to counter the dominant reading of the nature of business environment and corporations. Businesses are seen as properties of their owners (shareholders) and their activities are geared towards increasing shareholder value sometimes at the expense of other considerations such as community welfare. From its early articulation in Stanford Research Institute in the 1980s, stakeholder theory has sought to deconstruct or conceptualize the notion of value creation through trade or transaction (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010).

Prior to the introduction of this theory in 1984, business values and ethics were considered extra theoretical and irrelevant; the only value to be upheld was to increase shareholder value. This created problems which could not be explained as people's lives were greatly affected by this form of extreme capitalism. As time went by it became clear that restricting business function to economic gain was problematic. This raised questions about how the relationship between business and other social institutions should be (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010)

The stakeholder theory was propounded by Edward Freeman in the United States where it first gained much popularity in the 19th century. Stakeholder theory was born out of need to

find answers to the nature of the relationship between businesses and other social institutions. In the light of this, the unit of analysis for the stakeholder theory is relationship between a business and the groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by it - stakeholders.

The stakeholder theory challenges the perception that business and ethics are incompatible. This point is better illustrated with an explanation of the main principle of stakeholder theory which is the responsibility principle.

2.9.1.1 The Responsibility Principle in Stakeholder Theory

The responsibility principle stipulates that most people, most of the time want and do accept responsibility for the effects of their actions (Freeman et al. 2010). The responsibility principle of stakeholder theory is normative, multifaceted and may yield to different perspectives. Basically, the social responsibility principle implies that social actions have far reaching effects and consequences for different elements of society. The responsibility principle enjoins social actors (corporations) to take responsibility for their actions. The problem is however that too many individuals and corporations want to get away with as much as they can at the expense of others.

Once corporations come to the realization that their actions affect all stakeholders, there can no longer be a separation from value creation and the consequences of the action that is creating the value. The stakeholder theory proposition is simply that people engaged in value creation (business) should be considered responsible to identifiable social elements that affect and are affected by their actions (stakeholders). In the businesses context, this means looking out for the good of customers, the community, shareholders, suppliers and other interested parties (Freeman et al, 2010).

Stakeholder theory is descriptive, prescriptive and at the same time instrumental. This theory explains how business works and how business should work in order to be sustainable (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007). This theory was selected for the study because despite the differing views about the role of businesses in society the stakeholder theory can be used to explain the obligation of business to different societal constituents. The stakeholder theory was applied to explain how mining companies can manage stakeholders and meet their expectations through sustainability communication.

2.9.2 Situational Theory of the Publics

The Situational Theory of Publics is a communications theory that explains how communication practitioners, especially public relations practitioners can communicate effectively with large groups of people by dividing them into four publics based on their recognition and involvement about an organization or issue. It helps explain why certain publics are active or passive in their search for information about a topic.

In a 1978 seminal article, Grunig defined public simply as a group of people who behave similarly. This behaviour can be active involvement on an issue or issues or passive involvement (Grunig, 1978). The situational theory is effective in predicting public response to a variety of issues, the communication behaviour of publics about those issues, the impact of communication on the attitudes, cognitions, and behaviour of those publics, and the probability of public participation in collective action (Kim & Grunig, 2011).

Grunig (1983) developed five key variables that provide the framework for situational theory. The first three are independent variables, they are problem recognition, which provides a measure of how often a person thinks about an issue or problem. The second is constraint recognition which provides a measure of whether or not the person feels that he

or she can do something to solve the problem. The third independent variable, level of involvement, provides a measure of how connected the person feels to the issue. The two dependent variables are information seeking behaviour and information processing.

Grunig also identified four basic opinion publics based on behavioural types. First, members of the problem-facing public recognize the issue as a problem and perceive that something can be done to solve the problem. The constrained public recognizes the problem yet also recognizes constraints in solving the problem. Members of the routine public neither recognize the problem nor perceive constraints in solving the problem, whereas members of the fatalistic public do not recognize the issue as a problem, but they do perceive high constraints in solving the problem (Mayor, 2009).

Situational theory holds that communication behaviour varies as a function of opinion public membership. Grunig (1983) defined information seeking as the premeditated, planned scanning of the environment for messages about a specified topic, and information processing as the "unplanned discovery of a message, followed by continued processing of it"

The theory explicates that the probability of information seeking and processing is increased by the level of problem and constraint recognition, whereas level of involvement determines whether the communication behaviour will be active or passive. A high-involvement, problem-facing public is more likely than are other publics to seek information from interpersonal sources and specialized media, and to process information from mass media sources (Major, 2009; Major, 1998).

Under the low-involvement condition, the likelihood of communication should decrease; however, because high problem recognition and low constraint recognition increase the

likelihood of communication, the behaviours are still likely to occur among the problem-facing public even under low-involvement conditions (Major, 2009; Major, 1998).

Applied to this research, the situational theory helps explain the extent of involvement of different stakeholder groups and their communication behaviour. This theory is also beneficial for explaining the reasons why particular groups would be willing to engage mining companies in sustainability communication. Grunig's situational communication theory is also a useful tool for identifying different publics in the business environment and also how sustainability issues can be communicated to these groups.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter revealed that sustainability is a business approach and corporate sustainability communication is a narrative construct in which the discourse serves to frame and perform specified sustainable actions. In the mining sector, sustainability communication is a global best practice with potential to improve companies' relationship with stakeholders, shore up their reputation and enhance performance. Although corporate sustainability communication and corporate social responsibility are different concepts with different histories, they can both find space under the roof of public relations in the organisational setting. Sustainability communication has challenges which mainly stem from tensions between organisational views on sustainability and meeting multiple stakeholder expectations. These challenges can however be addressed by applying nuanced communication strategies to engage various stakeholders on sustainability issues.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed to conduct this study. It contains the research design, sampling techniques, data collection procedure, data analysis strategy and the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Research Design

All forms of social and scientific research need a design or structure prior to data collection and analysis. Research design is the overall plan for the study which ensures that evidence gathered in the course of the study sufficiently answers set research questions (De Vaus, 2001). It can also be described as the overall framework or blueprint that details how the various parts of research fit together (Dawson, 2002). The case study design was adopted for this study.

Case study is a useful and widely used research design which allows researchers to investigate phenomena in-depth without tampering with the meaningful characteristics of real life events (Zainal, 2007). Case studies involve investigating phenomena in real life environments from different perspectives. They are best suited for answering how and why research questions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) indicated that case study is one of several designs under qualitative research. Other qualitative designs are ethnography, content analysis and grounded theory.

Qualitative researchers lean towards social constructivism, the belief that humans seek to understand their world through interactions. The goal of qualitative research is to as much as possible preserve the multiple meanings and perspectives ascribed to events by participants.

Researchers who engage in case study research also have strong constructivist philosophical persuasions that make them adopt inductive approaches that focus on individual interpretation of issues as a mechanism for traversing the complex life situations they investigate (Creswell, 2013).

Case study research may involve one or several cases. When a study includes more than one subject (case) it is called multiple case study. This study a single case study as the researcher focused on the sustainability communication in one mining companies, Newmont Ghana limited. The rationale for using a case study design in this research was to explore and describe how both Newmont Ghana practices sustainability communication and how stakeholder expectations are met in the process. The use of case study design also allowed the researcher to combine various data collection techniques to explore the issues of interest in-depth in respondents' natural environment.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of a study is the totality of elements (items or individuals) that the researcher wishes to investigate (Rahi, 2017). It is important to properly circumscribe one's population as it constitutes the frame from which the final sample is drawn. The population for this study was made up of staff of Newmont Ghana Limited and the inhabitants of the communities in which the company operate. The study specifically focuses on local people located in close proximity of Newmont's Akyem operation. This population is suitable for the study as it contains professionals who design and implement sustainability communication but also local stakeholders with high interest in the sustainability practices of the company.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

In qualitative studies, the goal of sampling is not to achieve representative views, but rather information richness, appropriateness and adequacy (Guetterman, 2015). This study relied on non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling. In non-probability sampling, chances of selecting each unit or element is unknown (Rahi, 2017).

3.4.1 Purposive Sampling

This is a form of non-probability sampling in which respondents are selected based on predetermined criteria (Prunchno, et al., 2008). Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative studies when the researcher's aim is not to extrapolate or generalize findings, rather to interpret, explain and describe, issues from respondents perspectives (Suri, 2011).

In conducting the purposive sampling, researcher basically decided on what information is needed and then endeavored to find people who are able and are desirous of providing the necessary information by virtue of experience or knowledge. This sampling strategy was selected for this study because it is suitable for selecting key informants and other subject experts of interest in a reflective manner. Purposive sampling is recommended for studies pressed for time and budget, is also advantageous for selecting respondent who are information rich and can make valuable contribution to the study (Tongco, 2015).

In this study two members of Newmont Golden Ridge staff were selected from the company using purposive sampling. In addition, 12 community members were also selected using the same sampling strategy. These participants were selected because of their knowledge and experience regarding sustainability communication in the mining industry with particular regard to their community. The selected staff members represented the organisational perspective whilst the community members presented the stakeholder or community

perspective. The rationale for adopting purposive sampling is consistent with the view of Dawson (2009) that purposive samples are suitable for selecting key informants and other respondents based on their knowledge, experiences or profession.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

This study relied on focus group and in-depth personal interviews for primary data collection. Case studies can benefit from a combination of data collection instruments. This combination bolsters case studies for complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Zainal, 2007).

3.5.1 Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is among the very popular techniques used for data gathering in qualitative studies. This takes the form of guided discussions moderated by the researcher based on a set of questions designed to elicit responses meant to help address research questions.

The underlying notion from which focus group discussions draw their value is that listening to the opinions and thoughts of others can stimulate personal views and perspectives that would otherwise be lost in a personal interview or through a survey. The set of questions that guide researchers in the conduct of focus group discussion is called the focus group guide. A focus group may consist of 8 to 12 participants and may last for several minutes or a few hours depending on the issues to be covered and the responsiveness of participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Focus groups are notable for revealing valuable information and deep insight when conducted in a relaxed and comfortable environment with carefully selected participants.

In this study, one focus group discussion was conducted, it consisted of 12 community members (opinion leaders) purposively selected. The focus group was held in the community of the participants (Akyem). The focus group guide used for the exercise was designed by the researcher based on the scope and objectives of the study.

The main disadvantage of this instrument is that it is not suitable for collecting confidential information because of its public nature, it is also difficult to use this instrument when large populations are involved (Kusi, 2012). Notwithstanding, focus group discussion was useful for this study as the sample involved was sizeable and the nature of the information required was not confidential.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews are the most popular qualitative research techniques. Neuman (2007) defines interview as a conversation, which is purposed to record descriptions of the life and worldview of research subjects or participants. Whilst interviews might last for several minutes or few hours, its aim is usually to gather detailed information about a particular subject matter or topic. Through interviews, researchers can interpret phenomena based of the meanings interviewees bring to it (Patton, 2002).

Interviews help researchers to build holistic snapshots, analyse words and report detailed views of participants. Face to face in-depth interviews allow research participants to speak for themselves and in their own voice without inhibiting their thoughts and feelings (Patton, 2002). The rational for using interviews for this study is that they are beneficial for gathering narrative data that allows for in-depth investigation of participants' views.

A semi-structured interview was used for this study. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible and allow for in-depth exploration of issues by providing an opportunity for the

interviewer to probe and extend the interviewee's responses though follow up questions (Holliday, 2007). Semi-structured interviews make use of interview guide or checklist which help to direct the questions but the researcher is at liberty to ask follow question when necessary.

Berg, (2007) explained that the main advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to probe for in-depth understanding of issues while still retaining the original parameters of the study. The downside of this data collection technique is that interviews generally produce substantial unstructured data that can be difficult and time consuming to analyse. Lengthy interviews especially produce several pages of text when transcribed and this can be overwhelming for the researcher.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the data collection process an introductory letter was obtained from the Department of Media and Communication studies, University of Education, Winneba and was submitted to the head of the selected company, Newmont Ghana Limited. This was necessary to facilitate the field entry process and also to explain the purpose of the study to the heads of these companies in order to gain their cooperation. Sequel to the initial introduction, appointments were scheduled for the actual data collection.

All interviews were held in the office of the participants and were recorded with prior permission of the participants. The participants were also pre-informed about the nature of the questions and the purpose of the study which enabled them to prepare in advance for the interview. On the average an interview lasted for 25 minutes.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Data obtained through interviews was analysed using the thematic analysis technique. An inductive approach was taken to the thematic analysis which involved building patterns, themes and categories from the bottom-up. This was done by first transcribing the recorded interview and then reading the transcribed text thoroughly in order to organize the data into abstract but related units. The researcher then identified patterns from the abstractions and the patterns were used to form the themes or the pillars for the analysis. This inductive process involved working back and forth between the database and themes until a comprehensive and representative set of themes have been established.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ma, (2012) describes research ethics as the standards and norms that regulate the conduct of research by differentiating right from wrong. To a large extent the adherence to ethical principles indicate the validity and reliability of the research as it speaks volumes about the researcher's integrity. This study adhered to the ethical principles of respect for human dignity, beneficence, and social justice.

In qualitative studies, ethics usually boards on protecting the dignity of human subjects. As a result, throughout this research, there was utmost respect for all persons. The autonomy of subjects was upheld and the researcher neither coerced any respondent into cooperating with the study nor did she promise any immediate or future reward to influence respondent's decisions.

In addition, the researcher was guided by the principle of doing no harm, also known as beneficence. Participants were not exposed to any risk by partaking in this study. To ensure this, the entire data collection process was undertaken in respondent's own environment and

the researcher did not have any control over the conditions in these settings. So far as this research is concerned there was no social, psychological or physical risk to participants. Again, personal identities were not linked to interview responses. All information gathered was kept confidential and respondents were kept anonymous to protect their privacy.

Social justice was also ensured as the groups of people selected for the study were the right category for the study given their knowledge sustainability communication practices of mining companies. Again, the rights of participants was not in any way violated through the conduct of this study.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the field study. The findings are presented in a manner that directly addressed the four main research questions of the study. Being a qualitative study, a thematic analysis strategy was employed and verbatim quotations are presented to buttress the explanations of themes identified. The findings were obtained using focus group discussions and interviews. The focus group was constituted by opinion leaders from the following communities; Ahausena, Ahyim Hweakwae, New Abirem and Amanfrom. The staff of the company were also selected from the Community Relations and Corporate Sustainability department of the company.

4.2 How does Newmont Incorporate Sustainability Communication in its Activities?

The long-term success of any firm, particularly those in the extractive industry requires the integration of sustainability communication throughout business operations. The first research question sought to investigate how Newmont Ghana is incorporating sustainability communication into its activities in Ghana. This research question was addressed through interviews with selected staff of Newmont Ghana Limited. It was found out that the company employs various mechanisms for incorporating sustainability communication in its activities. These include quarterly community engagement meetings, knowledge sharing with industry, government and high-level stakeholder engagement and annual sustainability reporting.

4.2.1 Community Engagement

Newmont Ghana takes sustainability communication very seriously as the company's goal is to create value and improve lives through sustainable and responsible mining. The interviews revealed that the company engages with local people in the communities it operates. The company conducts quarterly town hall meetings for this purpose.

A community relations officer with the company stated that;

We engage with local communities to build productive and healthy relationships and contribute to creating shared value. We seek to establish and maintain transparent relationships built on mutual respect and trust with communities affected by our operations.

Another staff of the organisation reiterated the company's commitment to engaging with local people on sustainability issues;

The company engages in honest and transparent communication practices across all levels and in dealing with stakeholders because our guiding principles commit us to build relationships that are founded on a commitment to each other's success. Our officers act with humility and a willingness to listen, and the company is committed to resolving differences and conflicts constructively and transparently. We organize the town hall meetings and even other intermittent meetings because we seek mutually beneficial outcomes in our decision making such that we contribute to sustainable development.

4.2.2 Knowledge Sharing

Another way through which Newmont Ghana has woven sustainability communication into its activities is by generating knowledge resources, sharing knowledge, building capacity, and contributing to a meaningful partnership to enhance positive development outcomes in the communities where it operates.

We are committed to working with governments, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, multilateral organizations, local communities, the academic community, and Newmont employees in a manner that is transparent and facilitates the sharing of ideas, plans, and opportunities to create shared value while resolving disagreements and misunderstandings in good faith.

One community relations officer with the company also stated that

Through economic studies, we are measuring the overall economic contribution – inclusive of taxes, royalties, jobs, supplier contracts and induced benefits – our operations generate for host countries and communities and sharing this information with government officials and community leaders.

4.2.3 Engagement with Governments

Noticing the significance of its activities at the macro level, Newmont also engages with government and other key stakeholders at the national level such as a coalition of civil society organisations and labour unions. These high-level engagements are also designed to make the company accountable to major stakeholders and policymakers

A government relations officer at Newmont stated in an interview:

I have been working here for about eleven years so I have seen the company good times and in tough times. No matter the situation we try to have ongoing or recurring engagements with the national government. We engage with governments and other stakeholders on a variety of issues, including worker health and safety, environmental protection, trade, economic development, infrastructure, transparency, rule of law, and other areas of public policy that contribute to our success.

During a separate interview, another staff of the company stated;

Let me tell you, our engagements allow us to give an account but we also project into the future. For example, through proactive engagement and partnerships with governments, communities, and other stakeholders, we are seeking to create a common vision of future land uses and sustainable economic development opportunities, while also developing safe and stable landforms demonstrating water stewardship, and restoring ecological values.

4.2.4 Sustainability Reporting

Newmont Ghana demonstrates its commitment to sustainability also through the publication of an annual sustainability report. The report which is published at the end of each year is called Beyond the Mine sustainability report. It details the company's safety, economic, social and environmental performance.

Each year the sustainability report presents the company's efforts to meet the highest standards, contributing toward sustainable development and serving as responsible natural resource stewards to ensure we make

positive and lasting impacts on the communities and countries where we operate.

Another respondent from the corporate communication department explained that;

The reports are available and accessible in both hard and soft copy. Downloadable versions can be easily obtained from the company's website at any point in time. When you pick a copy you will immediately notice that we are very transparent about the sustainability targets achieved and those missed.

The outcomes of the study regarding the first research question show that Newmont incorporates sustainability communication in its operations. The sustainability communication activities of the company take the form of community engagement, knowledge sharing, government relations and the publication of an annual sustainability report. The sustainability communication of the company is broadly targeted at the local communities in which the company operates, government, mining industry players, civil society organisations and international audience.

The findings of the study support the perspective of earlier studies including Dyllick and Hockerts, (2002) and Bhimani, Silvola and Sivabalan (2016) that sustainability implementation is incomplete without sustainability communication. The outcomes of the study particularly conquer with Dyllick and Hockerts, (2002) that companies are paying increasing attention to sustainability issues because stakeholders are soliciting information on the environmental, social impacts, business operations and measures to benchmark corporate social and environmental performance in different industrial contexts.

Illustrating the importance of sustainability communication, Bhimani, Silvola and Sivabalan (2016) also notes that reporting corporate sustainability is not only essential for business to let stakeholders know the activities of the business, but it is also a vital management and communication practice with implications for overall business success, especially in the heavily regulated mining industry (Bhimani, Silvola & Sivabalan, 2016).

The outcomes of the study also show that Newmont uses a combination of one way and two-way communication strategies for its sustainability communication. This finding is acquiescent with Siano et al. (2016) who noted that sustainability communication is more than sender-oriented communication to persuade others. It includes processes of dialogue and discourse and the normative aspect of sustainable development. From this perspective, corporate sustainability becomes a narrative construct in which the discourse serves to frame and perform specified sustainable actions.

Also, sustainability communication at Newmont seems to take a cross-functional approach as it involves different departments. This result of the study is consistent with the position of Reeves (2016). Reeves (2016) advocated for a cross-functional approach to sustainability communication. Under this view, public relations is featured as a supportive or complementary function in sustainability issues. Notwithstanding, the linkages between recent theoretical approaches to public relations and the concept of corporate sustainability communications are not in dispute.

4.3 How does the Sustainability Communication Activities of Newmont meet the Expectations of Stakeholders?

To cater to diverse stakeholder needs and achieve continuous improvement, businesses need to engage with targeted stakeholders and obtain meaningful feedback on their sustainability performance and reporting processes, which helps to meet stakeholders' demands and improves businesses' future sustainability agenda. The second research question sought to investigate the extent to which stakeholders' expectations are being met through the sustainability communication activities of Newmont Ghana.

The second research was addressed from the stakeholders' perspective, hence the responses provided are those of opinion leaders in the communities where Newmont operates. The opinion leaders included youth leaders, assemblymen, queen mothers and unit committee members. It was realized that the community members seemed satisfied with the frequency of their interactions with the company and the nature of the engagement. Their expectations were however unmet regarding the seriousness attached to their input based on the processing of their feedback or contribution during community meetings.

4.3.1 Frequency of Meeting

Newmont engages with community members through community meetings and durbars. These meetings are held every three months. The meetings are organized in close collaboration with designated community relations officers and these meetings are attended by opinion leaders in the different communities where Newmont operates. It was realized that community members were content with the frequency of the meetings and the channels used for sustainability communication.

A youth leader said:

We meet every three months. It's ok so far as I am concerned. We are also able to call meetings outside this schedule whenever necessary so I think it's ok.

Another youth leader who was a member of the sustainable development committee stated;

When we have the meetings we listen to them [representation from Newmont] and they listen to us so everything is fine. The meetings are also attended by representatives from the EPA [Environmental Protection Authority] and so far the company is performing strictly to environmental expectations so it is fine from my perspective.

4.3.2 Mutual Understanding

Community opinion leaders also take the view that their needs are understood by Newmont and they also understand the sustainability strategy of Newmont. Several respondents were of the view that the company is responsible because it tries not to pollute the environment by blasting rocks in the open or near people's homes or farms.

Oh, they are doing well and we understand each other. They tell us they are trying to protect the environment so they don't destroy water bodies, neither do they blast rocks in the open to make our environment dusty.

A queen mother remarked that:

Newmont is planting trees all around. They are doing afforestation which is a good thing. We have suggested that they employ more of our people but so far I think they tell us whatever they are doing in terms of sustainability so

we know what they are about. Especially those of us opinion leaders who are part of the sustainable development committee.

4.3.3 Consideration of Views

Some community leaders, however, took the view that Newmont already has a plan and hence does not seriously consider the views shared during the community meetings.

An assembly member stated:

As for the meetings they organize and come, but Newmont expects the community to accept what they communicate but doesn't pay attention to what the community communicates.

The view expressed by the assembly member was repeated by another respondent who lamented that:

Concerns of the community are not seen to be relayed to top management because expectations are not met.

The outcomes of the study are indicative that there are mixed views regarding the extent to which Newmont meets the sustainability communication expectations of community members. A section of opinion leaders believes the company has done well by meeting with community members regularly and then listening to their concerns. However, another section of opinion leaders takes the view that the meetings are cosmetic because the company does not act on views and concerns expressed by the local people.

The findings of the study confirm other studies regarding the complexity of stakeholder expectations. Previous studies including Zhang and Moffat, (2015) explained that

stakeholder expectations and local attitudes are shaped by complex interactions of positive and negative factors, influenced by both mining company and government attempts at sustainable development and relations-building. Mining can affect almost all activities in a community; not just those stakeholders directly impacted by the mine. Potential environmental impacts, such as effects on terrestrial and aquatic systems, play a key role in shaping negative community perceptions towards mining projects, with community benefits and impacts on lifestyle exerting less influence (Zhang & Moffat, 2015).

Following the complexity of stakeholder expectations towards mining companies, Baker (2006) also explained that in today's business environment, stakeholder expectations must be consistently and frequently managed, to ensure the successful business outcome. Unmet stakeholder expectations may ultimately cost a mining company its license to operate, it can also fester altercations between a mining company and the local community or advocacy groups.

The outcomes of the study are further in line with the position of Dawkins (2004) who note that it is difficult for mining companies to satisfy stakeholder convincingly. Dawkins (2004) notes that although mining companies need to ensure that sustainability communication fits into the businesses strategy of the mining company, there are instances where the issues important to stakeholders are not relevant for the core business and the challenge becomes how to communicate to stakeholders that the issues are not of interest to the company. The challenge of making sustainability communication fitting to specific stakeholders expectations and the core business of a company can result in conflict when not handled well (Dawkins 2004).

4.4 What are the Challenges Encountered by Newmont Ghana during Sustainability Communication in the Mining Industry

The third research question examined the challenges associated with sustainability reporting. This research question was addressed from the perspective of Newmont Ghana staff, being the organisation that is obliged to communicate its sustainability initiatives to various stakeholders. It was realised that the main challenges encountered in sustainability communication include increased expectations from stakeholders, the multiplicity of stakeholders and their divergent interests and increasing depth of expertise required for stakeholder communication.

4.4.1 High Stakeholder Expectations

Stakeholder such as community people, their opinion leaders, civil society organisations and government agencies have high expectations of mining companies. The various categories of stakeholders expect so much in terms of what, how, and when Newmont should report. It was realized that community members especially have very high expectations of mining companies. They believe the companies should create employment and provide basic amenities for communities members in addition to mining in a sustainable manner.

Explaining the difficulty in meeting these expectations, one respondent stated;

Mining companies all over the world are no longer employing so much manpower as they used to. Currently, most of the operations have a lot of technology, innovations, and robots among others and have taken over the jobs traditionally done by the individuals. But the communities want more people employed

A community relations officer at Newmont also explained that:

There is a need for communities in mining operational areas to understand the unique nature of the industry. Newmont invests in communities, there is currently a tree-planting project, community water project and we support schools as well. However, the company cannot do everything for the community, but it seems that is what the community does not understand.

It would be observed from the responses that the high expectations of the different communities are creating a situation where there is a mismatch in expectations. This can be a recipe for disappointment if not addressed.

4.4.2 Multiple Stakeholders

Sustainability communication caters to multiple target audiences with varying expectations for what the company should report. The stakeholders targeted through sustainability communication are numerous and they vary widely in terms of their demographics, interests and the level of influence they have over the operations of the company.

A senior environmental coordinator at the company stated:

We report to the EPA on environment and safety issues, but we also prepare a version of that for the opinion leaders every three months when we meet them. It's the same thing but the level of details differ. It's like that because we have many people interested in our activities and you can see that places a high demand on us to satisfy everyone.

In a separate interview, another officer stated:

I have been working with this company for the past 16 years and during each community project the stakeholders cry out for their voices to be heard and for their opinions to be taken into account on the vital parts of the project to make deliverables a perfect-fit. However, managing the distinct projects with unaligned goals, incorporating stakeholder's ideas into the project, and ensuring everyone's wishes are met in a short timeframe is difficult.

Managing multiple stakeholder interests is particularly difficult because of the variance in the level of interest and influence that each stakeholder wields. For a company that seeks to satisfy all stakeholders, this can be challenging, especially when some stakeholders do not have a good appreciation of the companies activities.

4.4.3 Increasing Depth of Expertise Required For Sustainability Communication

Effective sustainability communication requires that companies disclose technical information across various issues and geographies for stakeholders of varying issue expertise. This task requires that community relations officers who are the liaisons between the mining company and the local community have a good understanding of issues to explain the same to the communities.

One community relations officer noted:

I must say that there are increased expectations for the level of detail and sophistication provided by companies in their communications. As liaisons, we face a lot of tough questions from community stakeholders because not everyone can understand these issues.

Another staff of the company commented:

For me, as someone working in the corporate communications unit, I interphase with technical people and also ordinary stakeholders sometimes. In preparing reports especially, the challenge is how to balance the demand for depth with a competing interest in simplifying the reports. In the end, when it is too technical, people will not understand, but it must also be detailed if not it may seem as though we are not transparent enough.

Taken together, the outcomes of the study regarding the third research question demonstrates that Sustainability officers and corporate communication professionals working with Newmont are increasingly aware of a need to tailor sustainability communication to their target audiences, but they remain challenged to develop communication materials that provide their diverse set of stakeholders with the “right” disclosures at the right time. This stems from the difference in background and understanding of the various stakeholders.

The outcomes of the study regarding the third research question are consistent with Irawan et al., (2016) who notes that sustainability communication is a challenging undertaking not only because it involves strategic planning and execution but rather due to the multiple stakeholders involved. Irawan et al., (2016) explain that in the developing world especially, mining companies operate in a very complex business environment where substantial stakeholder ambiguity must be managed. Stakeholder ambiguity occurs when stakeholders interpret company actions or information they receive in different ways depending on their individual goals, demands, and opinions.

The findings also strongly support the views of Du et al., (2010) that different stakeholder groups have varying expectations from the company's sustainability activities and they also have different demands for the kinds of information they want to receive and the channels through which they want to receive the information. Du et al., (2010) argued that for mining companies that have many stakeholder groups the challenge is to answer to all of the stakeholder demands in sustainability communication and to choose whom to prioritize. This is crucial as the sustainability communication issues the stakeholders know and are aware of gain better stakeholder support.

The findings of the study also show that a company may decide to be socially responsible but may find it difficult to do so effectively owing to several challenges. This is at variance with the stakeholder theory perspective advocated by Freeman et al, (2010) which sought to suggest that once corporations realize that their actions affect all stakeholders, there can no longer be a separation from value creation and the consequences of the action that is creating the value. The stakeholder theory proposition is simply that people engaged in value creation (business) should be considered responsible for identifiable social elements that affect and are affected by their actions (stakeholders). The theory failed to take notice of the difficulties that arise when companies are dealing with multiple stakeholders whose interest are sometimes divergent and even conflicting.

4.5 What Measures can be implemented to Improve Sustainability Communication at Newmont?

Improved sustainability communication informs managerial decision-making, engenders acceptance for Newmont's activities and create goodwill that aids marketing, hiring, and

retention. The final research examined different measures that can be implemented to improve the process and outcomes of sustainability communication at Newmont.

This research question was addressed through interviews with selected staff of Newmont and focus group discussion with opinion leaders from the communities. The measures identified include; periodic review of sustainability communication strategies, improved understanding of stakeholders' needs, leveraging effective communication for stakeholder management and the strengthening of sustainability communication expertise of the staff of Newmont.

4.5.1 Periodic Review of Sustainability Communication Strategies

During the focus group discussions and interviews, it was revealed that there is a need to review the existing sustainability communication strategy of Newmont periodically.

A youth leader revealed during the focus group discussions that:

Currently, there is one community relations officer to about three communities. This should be looked at so that we have one officer to one community.

A staff of Newmont who participated in the study also made a similar point during an interview:

The company continues to build relationships with all its key stakeholders and periodically it must review its engagement strategies to ensure it responds to stakeholder expectations.

Periodic review of sustainability communication approach would be beneficial for the company as it would enable it to engage better with stakeholders.

4.5.2 Improved Understanding of Stakeholders through Research

It was also found out that it is important for Newmont to invest in understanding the behaviour and interests of groups of targeted mining communities through surveys and data analysis, to incorporate the views of mining communities into its sustainability activities.

A community relations officer at Newmont quipped that:

The company conducted a survey a few years ago to get a sense of how various stakeholders understand its activities but I believe we need to do more investigation or research to come to terms with exactly what issues are of interest to our stakeholders.

One opinion leader stated:

From how I see it, the company does not understand us. They expect the community to take what they say but they do not spend time to understand the issues that matter to us and what we want from them.

Improved understanding of stakeholders is a prerequisite to effective communications with all stakeholders; mine employees, unions, government, regulators, investors, community leaders the media and others.

4.5.3 Leveraging Effective Communication for Enhanced Stakeholder Management

It was also revealed that Newmont can improve its stakeholder management by practising more effective communication. Managing stakeholders through effective communication requires doing stakeholder analysis to know the interests and influence of stakeholders and also their channel preferences.

Communication is vital to manage relationships with stakeholders, but when a vast amount of time is spent on communication with low-interest or low-influence stakeholders, then the key stakeholders find information overload and cannot stay up-to-date with the right information.

A government relations officer with the company stated.

Another staff of the company also suggested that

Taking into account our stakeholders' differing needs for information on the company itself and on the broader mining industry as a whole, it is incumbent on us to communicate with more clarity, accessibility and coherence.

4.5.4 Strengthening of Sustainability Communication Expertise

The strengthening of expertise on a wide range of sustainability topics everything from climate change to human rights, and privacy to labour standards has significance. During the focus group discussions, some community members felt that they should be granted more access to key managers in the company. Strengthening the sustainability communication expertise of staff would enable them to address the concerns of community members more competently.

One community relations officer acknowledged the need for more expertise:

We undergo periodic training but you see the field is changing and sometimes the people demand that we explain the things in the local language. To do that you have to understand the nitty-gritty of the issues. So more training will help. Not just for those of us in the communities, but even the engineers so that they will also know what to say and how to

explain things for people to understand because sometimes they are invited to our quarterly gatherings.

The findings of the study reveal that in all, the challenges encountered during sustainability communication can be addressed by revising the company's sustainability communication strategy and by building the capacity of staff. Additionally, the company must do more by way of understanding the issues that matter to community people and their real needs. Understanding staff is particularly important because it is only when stakeholders are understood that they can be communicated to effectively.

Bohling and Murgui (2014) argued for sustainability communication to be strategic and systematic it must be driven by robust, quality data and clear sustainability goals based on a sustainability strategy. In this sense, the findings of the study are in line with the surmise of Bohling and Murgui (2014) who also suggested that to communicate strategically and to respond properly to stakeholder demands mining companies must also have in place robust, resilient and highly organised sustainability communications system, based on a credible sustainability strategy. This study extends this perspective by adding that even the most strategic sustainability communication plan has to be periodically revised to make sure that it is in line with stakeholders needs.

Again, for best outcomes, sustainability communication must be initiated early and must continue through project completion. Effective stakeholder engagement begins during project design and continues for the life of the project. Building a strong relationship from the start can help develop support for the mining project and the company behind it (Siano, 2016). Information exchange during the design phase can help organizations avoid costly mistakes that are difficult to fix at a later stage.

A broad array of terms have been used to describe sustainability communication and there are many approaches to doing this such as direct stakeholders, including consultation, external relations, information disclosure and dissemination, and participation. In spite of this, the best approach is one that is transparent and honest. A mining company's interaction with stakeholders must hence be characterized by transparency and honesty, and build trust in the process (Crane, 2018).

The findings of the study also support the perspective of Bohling and Murgui (2014) that it is important to manage stakeholder communication effectively as a business function. Communication with stakeholders should be driven by a well-defined strategy and must have a clear set of objectives, timetable, budget, and allocation of responsibilities. Bohling and Murgui (2014) add that companies that take a systematic approach to sustainability communication grounded in business operations get better results from their time and resources, and can more effectively track and manage stakeholder issues and risks. The systematic approach includes researching stakeholders to know their interest, information needs and communication channel preferences (Bohling & Murgui, 2014).

From a theoretical perspective, stakeholders vary in their communication behaviour and hence there is the need for research to understand the interest and influence of various stakeholders. Stakeholders are thus situational publics and hence effective communication is required to manage them effectively. The situational theory holds that communication behaviour varies as a function of the opinion of public membership. Grunig (1983) defined information seeking as the premeditated, planned scanning of the environment for messages about a specified topic, and information processing as the "unplanned discovery of a message, followed by continued processing of it"

The theory further explicates that the probability of information seeking and processing is increased by the level of problem and constraint recognition, whereas the level of involvement determines whether communication behaviour will be active or passive. A high-involvement, the problem-facing public is more likely than are other publics to seek information from interpersonal sources and specialized media, and to process information from mass media sources (Major, 2009; Major, 1998).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter of the study presents recap of all manor findings of the study along with conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

This study investigated the sustainability communication practices of Newmont Ghana. It specifically examined how Newmont Ghana is incorporating sustainability communication into its operations and how the sustainability communication practices of the company meet the expectations of stakeholders. It also examined the challenges the company encounters during sustainability communication and proffered measures for improving sustainability communication at Newmont Ghana.

A single case study design was adopted for this study which allowed the researcher to combine various data collection techniques to explore the issues of interest in-depth in respondents' natural environment. A total of fourteen (14) participants were purposively sampled for the study. This consisted of two (2) staff of the Newmont Ghana limited and twelve (12) opinion leaders from communities surrounding the company's Akyem operation.

It was found out that Newmont incorporates sustainability communication in its operations. The sustainability communication activities of the company take the form of community engagement, knowledge sharing, government relations and the publication of an annual sustainability report. The sustainability communication of the company is broadly targeted

at the local communities in which the company operates, government, mining industry players, civil society organisations and international audience

It was also revealed that the stakeholders had mixed views about the extent to which Newmont meets the sustainability communication expectations of community members. A section of opinion leaders believes the company has done well by meeting with community members regularly and then listening to their concerns. However, another section of opinion leaders is of the view that the meetings are cosmetic because the company does not act on views and concerns expressed by the local people.

Further, it emerged that sustainability officers and corporate communication professionals working with Newmont are increasingly aware of a need to tailor sustainability communication to their target audiences, but they remain challenged to develop communication materials that provide their diverse set of stakeholders with the “right” disclosures at the right time. This stems from the difference in background and understanding of the various stakeholders

Again, the findings of the study showed that the challenges encountered during sustainability communication can be addressed by revising the company’s sustainability communication strategy and by building the capacity of staff. Additionally, the company must do more by way of understanding the issues that matter to community people and their real needs. Understanding staff is particularly important because it is only when stakeholders are understood that they can be communicated to effectively.

5.2 Conclusion

The outcomes of the study particularly concur with Dyllick and Hockerts, (2002) that companies are paying increasing attention to sustainability issues because stakeholders are soliciting information on the environmental, social impacts, business operations and measures to benchmark corporate social and environmental performance in different industrial contexts. It can also be concluded that sustainability communication at Newmont is cross-functional as it involves different departments. This result of the study is consistent with the position of Reeves (2016).

Consistent with earlier studies including Previous studies Zhang and Moffat, (2015), the outcomes of this study show that stakeholder relations are quite complex and dynamic. Zhang and Moffat, (2015) explained that stakeholder expectations and local attitudes are shaped by complex interactions of positive and negative factors, influenced by both mining company and government attempts at sustainable development and relations-building. Mining can affect almost all activities in a community; not just those stakeholders directly impacted by the mine.

Further, Dawkins (2004) this study also demonstrates that is difficult for mining companies to satisfy stakeholder convincingly. Dawkins (2004) notes that although mining companies need to ensure that sustainability communication fits into the businesses strategy of the mining company, there are instances where the issues important to stakeholders are not relevant for the core business and the challenge becomes how to communicate to stakeholders that the issues are not of interest to the company. The challenge of making sustainability communication fitting to specific stakeholders' expectations and the core business of a company can result in conflict when not handled well.

The findings also strongly support the views of Du et al., (2010) that different stakeholder groups have varying expectations from the company's sustainability activities and they also have different demands for the kinds of information they want to receive and the channels through which they want to receive the information. Du et al., (2010)

The study also concludes that the many stakeholder groups and their diverse interests present a major challenge to effective sustainability communication. It is difficult for the company to answer to all the stakeholder demands in sustainability communication and to choose whom to prioritize. The findings of the study also support the perspective of Bohling and Murgui (2014) that it is important to manage stakeholder communication effectively as a business function.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for consideration based on the conclusions of the study.

First, Newmont must not only manage stakeholder communication effectively as a business function, but it must do so transparently.

Newmont must take a more proactive and systematic approach to track and manage stakeholder issues and risks as it appears some stakeholders are dissatisfied with the current sustainability communication strategy of the company.

The company must again invest more in community research and engagement to better understand stakeholders' interests, information needs and communication channel preferences.

The company must also strive to balance sustainability communication in a manner that reflects the core business of a company but also fits into stakeholders' expectations.

Future studies may compare the sustainability communication practices of different mining companies to identify commonalities and best practices.

Further research is also imperative to understand how the sustainability communication strategies of the company meet the expectations of institutional stakeholders such as the investor community, government and the industry regulator.



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APPENDIX

Interview question for selected staff of Newmont

Kindly introduce yourself indicating your designation in this organisation and how long you have been in that position?

1. Could you please highlight some of the measures being taken by Newmont Ghana to ensure sustainability of its operations?
2. Kindly describe to me this company's sustainability communication policy
3. How are issues surrounding sustainability communicated to the following stakeholders?
 - Government
 - Investors
 - Community people
 - Staff of Newmont
4. In your opinion, does the existing sustainability communication practices meet the needs of stakeholders?
5. What challenges does Newmont Ghana encounter during sustainability communication?
6. In your view what measures can be taken to improve sustainability communication at Newmont Ghana?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Kindly introduce yourself indicating your designation and role in the community

1. How do you (opinion leaders) put across your concerns to management of Newmont Ghana?
2. What channels do you use and how often do you engage?
3. In your view what is being done by Newmont Ghana to ensure that it protects your environment?
4. How do you receive communication on these activities mentioned?
5. How do you think people understand communication relating to sustainability practices of Newmont?
6. What are some of the challenges you face as a community in your communication with leadership of Newmont Ghana?
7. What can be done to improve how Newmont Ghana communicates sustainability issues with its stakeholders, especially community members?