INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES ON CRISIS PREPAREDNESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KAPENGURIA, WEST POKOT COUNTY, KENYA

BY

CHRISTINE CHEPORIOT LOSEM

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for an award of a degree in any other University.

…………………………   …………………….

Christine Cheporiot Losem   **Date**

Reg No: SHRD/PGC/07/15

Declaration by Supervisors

The thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors:

…………………………   …………………….

Prof. Okumu-Bigambo W.   **Date**

Department of Publishing, Journalism & Communication Studies

School of Information Sciences

Moi University

…………………………   …………………….

Prof. Rotich D.C.   **Date**

Department of Publishing, Journalism & Communication Studies

School of Information Sciences

Moi University

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents and siblings for their support during my study

ABSTRACT

Communication has been recognised as one of the most important requirements in communicating emergency and crisis situation to all stakeholders in schools. This is because crisis situations can cause social and emotional distress to stakeholders within the school at any time without warning and in such situations communication is needed to ensure those affected are informed on what is happening or what needs to happen. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine how communication is used as a crisis preparedness strategy by secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to: to explore the kind of crisis faced by public secondary schools; establish communication practices available in public secondary schools; establish the effect of communication practices on crisis preparedness and suggests ways of improving communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County. The study was anchored on situational crisis theory, attribution theory and stakeholder theory. The study used a descriptive research design guided by pragmatism philosophical approach. The area of study was Kapenguria Sub-County also known as Kapenguria constituency. The unit of analysis was public secondary schools in the Sub-County. The target population consisted of 36 principals, 368 teachers and 36 student council chairs. A sample of 36 principals, 36 student leaders and 196 teachers were selected to participate in the research through simple random sampling technique. The tools used for collection of data were questionnaires (for teachers) and interview schedules (for student leaders and principals). The instruments were piloted and tested for validity and reliability prior to the main study. Data collected was analysed using qualitative and quantitative form. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics with coding and entry being facilitated by SPSS (version 26.0). Qualitative data from open ended questions was analysed through thematic content analysis and presented in narrations. The study found out that schools experienced various forms of crisis but not to a larger extent as anticipated. The three common crisis that secondary schools experienced consisted of; drugs and substance abuse by students, bullying and thefts. On preparedness towards crisis management, it was found out that almost 75% of schools were not prepared. The communication approach used in most schools was top bottom with less than 25.0% being diagonal/horizontal. The study found out that crisis communication guidelines were not used in many schools that were studied. The active crisis communication preparedness found to be working was guidance and counselling programmes. Nevertheless, majority of respondents said that crisis communication preparedness was significant in ensuring information was shared to all stakeholders and the damages occasioned by crisis breakout would be minimised. The study concludes that communication has a significant effect on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. The study recommends that schools stakeholders need to be trained on importance of communication in crisis preparedness and management. Government should also provide additional support to school to enable usage of various communication media to disseminate information. The school management should ensure that the crisis communication and disaster team are in place and active to respond to any emerging issues associated with crisis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BOM	Boards of Management
LUSD	Large Urban School District
MOE	Ministry of Education
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
SMCs	School Management Committees
SMS	Short Message Service
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
US	United States

OPERATIONALISATION OF TERMS

Crisis: refers to a sudden emergency that may arise in an organisation. In this study it refers to emergency that can be experienced in schools like; disease outbreak, injuries, fire incidents, strikes, natural disasters and death.

Crisis Management: the process by which an organisation deals with a crisis. In this study, it refers to action taken by secondary school management to address crisis.

Crisis Preparedness: activities carried out by an organisation to prevent a crisis, to control it, and protect itself from it. In this study, it refers to the capacity of secondary schools to anticipate and be in a position to respond to crisis incidents in a school.

Crisis Communication: strategies aimed at protecting the reputation of the organisation and maintaining its public image following a crisis. In this study it refers to approaches and methods used to send and receive information when crisis are imminent.

Principals: Heads of secondary schools that may include headmaster/mistress, head teacher, chief principals, senior principals but in this study all of them would be referred to as principals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

This chapter provides background information to the study on crisis preparedness in secondary schools from different contexts. The chapter also presents the main problem, objectives, purpose of the study, scope, research questions, significance, limitations, assumptions and delimitations are also illustrated.

1.2 Background of the Study

Crisis is a sudden emergency that may arise in any organisation including educational institutions (Ruff & Aziz, 2016). Crises can occur in any and all organizations, regardless of size; however educational institutions are very susceptible to crises (Mayo, 2015). Coombs (2007) defined crisis as the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and could seriously influence organisation's performance and generate negative outcomes. In an education setting, crisis is any situation faced by staff or students causing them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that may interfere with their ability to perform at the school (Hill, 2015). This means that schools are not immune to crisis and therefore appropriate interventions need to be taken into consideration to prepare and manage them for the good of the stakeholders (staff and students).

1.2.1 Crisis Facing Secondary Schools

Onigbinde (2018) argued that education as a paramount factor of economic development suffers from the uncontrollable effects of these increasing events from storms to floods, earthquakes to wildfires. Globally, educational resources are destroyed, directly and indirectly, students and teachers are displaced or killed and

parents' income is affected because of natural disasters. One of the leading crises in schools across the world is arson (Vito & Maahs, 2015). For instance, a study conducted in the United States established that fire setting is one of the most prevalent youth crimes facing schools leading to adverse economic, material, and social outcomes (Persson & Uhnoo, 2019). In Nigeria, school fires have been reported to be prevalent and thus the need to educate and train school children on effective ways of raising fire awareness (Umanah II, Ibe, & Rukewe, 2018). In Kenya, research conducted by the National Crime Research Centre (2017) reported various factors attributed to frequent burning of secondary schools.

Another crisis facing secondary schools is bullying. It is characterised by repeated harm of a person or a group of people by another because of unequal power. In this case, a more powerful individual instils harm to a less powerful one repeatedly. In the United States, the prevalence of bullying in schools is between 25% and 33%, with most of the cases happening in middle school (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). In the United States, social and verbal bullying is prevalent. The leading risk factor for bullying is young people who are regarded to be different from their peers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019).

In South Africa, bullying in schools is manifested in various ways, such as fighting of smaller boys by bigger boys, taking someone's possessions by force, and forcing an individual to do something he or she does not like (Hlophe et al., 2017). Regionally, in Ugandan schools, bullying is manifested through physical and emotional violence (Wandera et al., 2017). In Kenya, it was reported that there is a high incidence of bullying in secondary schools. It was further established that 97.6% of the girls had experienced bullying, while 98.3% of the boys were also victims (Itegi, 2017). The

common forms of bullying included cyber bullying and emotional disturbances. Bullying has been reported to have an adverse impact on the victims as manifested through panic attacks, impaired self-esteem, poor academic outcomes, poor concentration, and increased irritability (Manyibe & Anyona, 2018).

Mururi (2014) noted that one of the serious and growing problems in the secondary school was the increase of crisis and disasters. Records showed an increase in the number of fires, rape, collapse of buildings, roof blown off by wind, floods, drought and HIV/AIDS. This study investigated the kinds of crisis that secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County face and how are they preparedness to address and manage them.

1.2.2 Communication Practices as a Strategy in Crisis management

This research focuses on how schools are prepared to utilise communication to dispense messages whenever a crisis happens or in preparation for an expected crisis. While borrowing from attribution theory, Coombs (2007) opines that a crisis response strategy is a form of crisis communication that focuses on how institutional responses are presented to the public and how this information is narrated to repair the reputation of the organisation.

Crisis communication has also been reported to be crucial in the prevention of a crisis and its management as well as in ensuring that an organisation returns to normalcy promptly. Crisis communication involves unitising information aimed at identifying risk and prompting mitigation strategies focused on checking risk, harmonising support and recovery following a crisis (Mutisya & Mberia, 2018). Crisis communication is vital because it helps arrest rumours, speculation, and half-truths that may have an adverse impact on the organisation and its image. Consequently,

educational institutions need to prioritise communication as a core part preparing for crisis that they may encounter.

1.2.3 Crisis Preparedness

Crisis preparedness is manifested by organisations' ability to respond effectively to the crisis (Nelson, 2018). It is worth noting that when an organisation fails to prepare for a crisis, there is an increased likelihood of failure to address the situation when it arises (Tokel, Ozkan & Dagli, 2017). There are many types of crises that may be encountered daily in school settings as described in the previous sections. A research conducted by Ayonga (2016) reported that the majority of secondary school teachers lack adequate knowledge of fire safety preparedness has serviced fire fighting equipment, lack professional fire fighters, and lack emergency plans. The knowledge and skill to handle and mitigate effects of such an event is the basic requirement of the crisis management function (Javed & Niazi, 2015).

According to Gentilluci (2007), ambiguous and weak crisis preparedness policies, coupled with a lack of resources for proper training, leave many principals ill-prepared for the task of managing the crises when they occur. This means that there is need for school to be equipped with knowledge and skills related to crisis management, preparedness and effective communication styles (Hill, 2015). This calls for early crisis preparedness plan. Mutisya and Mberia (2018) said that students discipline related crisis in which school property is destroyed, lives threatened and precious teaching and learning time lost has remained a concern among stakeholders. Particularly, the record burning of schools in the year 2016 pointed at the magnitude of the problem. Communication has been identified as a critical tool in managing crisis in learning organizations. However, communication response in the

management of crisis has remained largely unexplored which is the focus of this study. Consequently, it is essential to understand how crises are manifested in schools and the extent to which schools are prepared to respond to different crisis through proper and adequate communication medium.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Schools are faced with multiple crises on daily basis in form of fires and bullying, resulting in traumatic experiences on teachers, students, and workers. Across, the globe, school crises have been linked to student indiscipline. Specifically, in Kenya, school fires are caused by peer pressure, exam-related pressure, an extension of term dates, absence of principals from schools, increased indiscipline cases across schools, and lack of robust guidance and counselling services (National Crime Research Centre, 2017). When school administrators adequately prepare for a crisis, there is an increased likelihood that a crisis will be curbed and appropriately responded to when it emerges.

Crisis management and prevention can also be achieved through communication. For example, through proper communicate practices, teachers can manage students' discipline by making them understand school rules and regulation and making them know appropriate channels of reporting issues that may lead to crises. However, if a disaster occurs, there is also a need for school heads to keep all educational stakeholders abreast of what is happening. When there is the failure to address a crisis effectively, the school management (especially the principals) are put to task to explain why the situation has gotten out of hand. Even though the causes and impact of crises have been adequately explored in the empirical literature, there is a

knowledge gap regarding crisis preparedness and communication at secondary school in the management of crises.

The need for the proposed study is also attributable to the fact that in the past few years, there have been increased cases of crisis (e.g., damage to property and arson by students) in several schools such as Chewoyet National School (Nation Media, 2019) and Ortum Boys Secondary School (The Standard Media, 2018). One of these schools, Chewoyet National School, has experienced four dormitory fires in the last five years (Nation Media, 2019). Despite these crises, no empirical research study has been conducted to examine the role of crisis preparedness and communication in thwarting or responding appropriately to such crises. Therefore, the study assessed crisis preparedness and crisis communication in Secondary School in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of study was to investigate communication practices used in crisis preparedness and suggest strategies for improvement in public of secondary schools in Kapenguria, West Pokot County, Kenya.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

i)   To identify the kind of crises faced by public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County

ii)   To establish communication practices available in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County.

iii)   To establish the effect of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County.

iv)   To suggests ways of improving communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County

1.6 Research Questions

The following are study research questions:

i)   What are the common crises that public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County face?

ii)   What are the communication practices available in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County?

iii)   What is the effect of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County?

iv)   What needs to be done in improving communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study is beneficial to the following individuals and institutions; secondary schools, principals, board of management, ministry of education and future scholars. The significances touch on policy, practical and theoretical areas as discussed below. The study is beneficial in establishing effective communicative strategies aimed at management of crisis in secondary schools. This is because by understanding secondary schools on crisis preparedness would help school management to manage crisis well. To school heads, it has been established that principals and teachers are not knowledgeable in crisis communication competencies, and then capacity building aimed at making them communicate well in a better manner during a crisis has been recommended.

Thirdly, by understanding schools level of preparedness for a crisis, the Ministry of Education can organise for training focused on equipping the principals, teachers and students with crisis preparedness and communication skills. Fourthly, by sharing the study findings with educational stakeholders such as management, then adequate plans for a crisis communication can be developed.

Lastly, the study makes scholarly contributions by adding to the existing body of knowledge on how communication can be used to address crisis preparedness in secondary schools within Kenya and outside the country.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Three limitations must be addressed regarding various aspects of the study. First, even though the use of descriptive research design helps a researcher to understand the factors associated with a particular situation, conditions, and behaviours, it does little other than describing relationships without explaining causal pathways (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). Second, the use of a non-experimental research design does not allow the researcher to determine the causal association between variables linked to the study. The findings of the study may not be generalised to primary school heads and primary schools since it was conducted in secondary schools. Overall, because the sample primarily comprises of secondary school, the findings have limited generalisability.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that various communication strategies are used by school management to address various crisis facing secondary schools. Another assumption that the study made was is that sampled respondents cooperated, responded honest

and voluntarily participated in the study. Secondary schools had records of various crises that they had faced in the last five to ten years.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

Kombo and Tromp (2006) define delimitations as choices that the researcher makes for the study that are under the control of the researcher. These choices inform the reader what information is included in the research which adds credibility. The proposed study was delimited to Kapenguria Sub County as the study unit considering crisis incidents have been recorded in recent past. This means that the findings are delimited to situation of crisis communication by schools in West Pokot County that varied what is happening in the neighbouring sub counties. The target population comprised of principals, student leaders and teachers of public secondary schools only. And therefore principal, teacher and student leaders of private secondary schools were not involved. The variables under investigation are crisis communication practices, crisis preparedness, effects of communication practices on crisis preparedness and suggest ways of improving communication practices on crisis preparedness in secondary schools. Hence, results of this investigation can only be generalised to other schools in West Pokot County albeit with caution.

1.11 Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

The chapter has looked at crises situations facing secondary schools. The chapter has also reviewed information on communication practices and crisis preparedness in secondary schools and why communication is important when managing crisis in schools. The reasons for conducting this study have also been tackled in the problem statement. The explanation of the geographical location has also been done together with main and specific objectives of the study. The reasons conducting this study have

been explained with expected significance for policy and practice by various stakeholders in the significance of the study.

The thesis is organised into five chapters. The first chapter has covered background information to the research problem, objectives and also significance of the study. Chapter two covers review of theoretical and empirical literature in relation to the study topic. Chapter three covers the design and methodological procedures followed when collecting the data from respondents. Chapter four presents the findings, interpretation and discussions. Chapter five focuses on conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the review of related literature on the influence of communication practices on crisis preparedness in educational institutions. The chapter reviews conceptual and theoretical literature related to the objectives of the study. Further, the three theories that anchor this study are provided at the end.

2.2 Crisis Communication in Schools

Williams (2019) reports that crisis communication systems (CCS) in educational settings have been challenged by mass casualty events including shootings, natural disasters, and health outbreaks in the United States. Snoeijers, Poels and Nicolay (2014) say that academic institutions have every reason to avoid damaging their reputations through mismanaged crises. Mensah (2018) observed that communication plays a vital role in the success of any organization, including secondary schools as in this study. Hence, educational institutions have the moral duty to protect their students from harm by effective communication in a time of crisis.

How well the communication message is composed determines how it will be understood and what response it will generate. However, it needs to be emphasised that for warning information to achieve the desired results, it must be short, precise, unambiguous and timely (Owolabi & Ekechi, 2014). Ineffective communication can hinder the growth of institutions and organizations (Mensah, 2018). The sender of information must ensure the receiver gets the information without distortion. The communication process is incomplete without feedback. Administrators in secondary

schools must communicate effectively if they want to achieve their goals and objectives.

The channels of communication or where messages are passed is of great importance. Moore (2015) recorded that conventional wisdom suggests effective and timely school communications increase parental involvement. Despite technology revolution in the communication industry, fixed and mobile telephones are commonly used by a significant population as dependable and efficient communication channels. Through telephone, quick warning messages can be sent by making calls and sending pre-determined short message service (SMS) to several people. The only disadvantage of this channel is the inability of many to access the message due to illiteracy level especially to parents of some students (Owolabi & Ekechi, 2014). Further, the process of communication is not complete until the intended receivers receives the message and respond to it. How well the information is received depends on what information was sent, how it was packaged, the channels used and of course, the understanding ability of the receiver (Owolabi, 2013).

In the secondary school, the principal is not working alone. The principal has to share information, transfer ideas and feelings through communication to enhance the collective cooperation of others within the school. The school management must not only communicate downward management in thoughts and in decisions but also upward reactions and development in the ranks. In fact, in order to persuade, instruct, direct, request, inform, stimulate, the principal must engage in upward and downward communication (Nakpodia, 2010). However, a research by Gentilucci (2007) observed that crisis communication training of school principals was problematic because it over emphasises media relations and underemphasizes the critical

importance of immediate and personal communication with students, staff, and parents-those most affected by school crises. The communication network therefore, is seen as being very significant to the life of the school. It is a main avenue through which the school personnel gets an opportunity to identify and appreciate what the school is doing, the atmosphere in which it operates, what is expected from the school and the public. On the bases of these, principals design programme that could make or mar the school system

To appreciate the need for robust crisis communication in the management of crisis, it is crucial to understand the value of communication during a crisis. In the era of internet and presence of many social media platforms that could be used to disseminate information, it is crucial for those tasked with the management of a crisis to understand best communication strategies (Lin, Spence, Sellnow, & Lachlan, 2016). Plance (2012) observed that the role of the media in crisis is changing with the landscape of technology. Their value is still apparent, but their role has been augmented by the explosion of social media. The media and emergency management organizations must learn to embrace this new technology to remain the viable sources of public safety information.

Social media have evolved into the fastest and most direct means to communicate with student populations (Snoeijers et al., 2014). When using social media to communicate to stakeholders about a crisis, one of the best practices is to monitor misinformation. This is because any person with a social media account can share information regarding the crisis. Misinformation arises when crisis managers and practitioners fail to provide the desired information on time. Misinformation such as

rumours is highly likely to escalate the crisis and negatively affect the reputation of the organization (Lin, et al., 2016).

It has also been emphasized that cooperation with the public and other organisations is a critical aspect of crisis communication. Social media platforms enable an organisation affected by a crisis to cooperate with the public, groups, and diverse agencies. Social media allows an organisation to share relevant information with the media, government, and the general public thus creating a cooperative environment strategy (Lin, et al., 2016). Moreover, when utilising social media for communication of a crisis, the crisis managers should actively engage in dialogue with stakeholders and the victims. Through such platforms, crisis managers address stakeholders' concerns and respond to victims' requests for help promptly (Lin, et al., 2016). Because of the potential of social media to disseminate information in real-time and address questions raised by stakeholders, organisations should integrate the use of social media into crisis-related policies.

When crisis managers want to share information with the public, an issue which continually arises is source and credibility perception (Zoonen & Meer, 2015). Information is highly likely to be seen as being credible if it is coming from an official social media account of the organisation or the manager of the same organisation. Several investigations have been done pertaining communication channels used in educational institutions around the world. In Ontario Canada Mensah (2018) examined the communication process between senior administrators and faculty members in one university. Semi structured interviews were used to gather data from senior administrators and faculty members. Findings revealed channels of communication used and preferred by both administrators and faculty. Some of these

channels included emails and face to face interactions. Though email was the most used channel of communication in the case study, participants' preferred face to face interactions. This was preferred because it allows communicators to give live feedback interpreted through body language and facial expressions.

In US, Pleggenkuhle (2017) measured strategic communication by conducting a communication audit of the fastest growing school district in Iowa, by interviewing 10 school leaders and analyzing essential communication products including 26 web pages and 10 district newsletters. Results suggest district communication products expressed brand themes of excellence, heritage, relationships, and innovation, but inconsistently across communication products. Moore (2015) phenomenological study documented 16 parents' perceptions of communication between teachers and parents at 2 K-8 schools in the American southwest. Semi-structured interviews were used. Findings revealed that both schools lacked effective communication tools, inhibiting the ability to reach students' families and negatively impacting participation. This means that incase of crisis, communication may not reach the parents well as envisaged as a result of lack of effective communication tools established by schools.

In Nigeria, Alimasunya et al. (2019) study was to establish how secondary schools in the study area have put in place five evacuation/ safety plans as a measure of fire disaster preparedness, also to determine whether secondary schools train teachers, workers, and student in appropriate response procedure in case of fire incident. Descriptive design method was adopted for this study. The result from the study reveals that fire disaster preparedness among secondary schools in port Harcourt was very inadequate as there was inadequate five fighting equipment, inadequate

structures built to fire safety standard, inadequate training for secondary schools stakeholders, as well as inadequate five evacuation plans.

Apondi (2014) assessed forms of communication in Nairobi secondary schools. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population was members of the students' council, teachers and deputy principals. The study found that the following forms of communication are used in schools: school parliaments or barazas, assembly hall announcements, members of the students' council and reporting to relevant authorities. Communication tools used in secondary schools in Nairobi County include: notice boards, suggestion boxes and end of year reports, school calendars, minutes, internal memos, students' notice boards and message box. The study also found that one of the roles of the members of the students' council is to communicate the students' needs to the relevant authorities. Some of the needs communicated include: complaints on quantity of food given to students, missing of lessons by some teachers, absenteeism, harsh punishment, list of areas students want to be improved in the school, changes in the school routine and welfare of the members of the students' council. The present study focused on how communication channels were used in crisis preparedness in schools an issue that the cited studies failed to establish especially in the Kenyan scene.

2.3 Crisis Preparedness in Schools

Javed and Niazi (2015) described that crisis is an event of any unexpected situation which can cause harm to the organization, its staff, property, stakeholders, repute of an organization and its future assets. Crisis in secondary schools includes the following situations: death of student or any other staff member, serious (life-

threatening) injury or illness of a student or other staff member, any situation in which a parent or news reporter is already involved or will be the next day, any situation which requires immediate action by the principal on call staff member and any emergency which is clearly out of normal limits (Mayo, 2015).

On the other hand, Javed and Niazi (2015) mentioned the following as crisis facing secondary schools; school bus crashes, suicides, or multiple injuries or deaths, natural disasters occurring among students or members of the staff in the school. Further, Mururi (2014) mentioned that crisis can involve natural disasters and emergencies. Types of natural hazards that can cause disasters are earthquakes, floods, drought, landslides, tropical storms and volcanoes among others. Man-made disasters are caused by the actions of human beings either directly or indirectly. These disasters include wildfires, accidental release of oils on land and in the sea, road accidents bomb blast / violence, pollution especially in industrial accidents. Crises tend to be far outside the normal experience of those involved.

The phenomenon of crises in secondary schools in Tanzania has been common since Tanzania attained independence in 1961. Almost each year unperfected resources are being utilized in building and buying new school properties to replace those destroyed. Sometimes these crises result into closure of schools because of high damage of schools properties. Usually, teaching and learning processes cannot be carried out in damaged environment (Nkya, 2013). Simiyu, Katiambo and Lutomia (2013) noted that disasters of various kinds have been witnessed in learning institutions in Kenya for many years. Indeed, disasters disrupt the education process and undermine quality of education.

Regardless of the type of event, crises can cause disruption or chaos, involve serious physical risks, and trigger emotional and psychological problems that can have long-term consequences for the stakeholders in the schools; parents, teachers, administrators and students (Hill, 2015). Mutisya and Mberia (2018) reported that students' discipline-related crisis has resulted in the destruction of school property, life-threatening events, and loss of teaching and learning time. This research investigated whether this kind of crisis exists or were prevalent in secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

Schools must be safe in order for students to learn, teachers to teach, and student academic achievement levels to improve (Hill, 2015). Owolabi and Ekechi (2014) noted that disasters, whether natural or man-made have engendered widespread unimaginable destructions to lives and properties across the world. Crisis preparedness is a crucial aspect of school life because of the potential danger, injuries, and loss of lives attributed to failure to appropriately and adequately plan for a crisis. Hill (2015) argued that crisis preparedness is a necessary tool to reduce adverse consequences of a crisis situation. Preparing for a crisis can be an endless endeavour, but school administrators must ensure appropriate crisis preparation is in place, practiced, and revisited in order to remain effective.

While comprehensive safe school planning will not necessarily guarantee the elimination of every act of crisis in a school, Pollack and Sundermann (2001) maintained that schools that engage in preparing and implementing crisis plans effectively are more likely to foster safe environments for their students and teachers. Preparing for a crisis is a proactive approach to keeping school environments safe, rather than being reactive and unprepared should a crisis occur (Hill, 2015).

Maida (2012) indicated that school disaster planning is important because schools are places of frequent mass gathering. In US, Alba and Gable (2011) indicated that a majority of public school districts have developed crisis preparedness plans; however, policy and procedural implementation is inconsistent across schools, districts, and states. In Pakistan Shah et al. (2018) observed that, school safety and preparedness is still a choice, rather than a mandatory requirement for all schools. But schools in Pakistan do have a responsibility to keep safe the students in their care, especially during and after the catastrophic events.

Another issue associated with the crisis in schools in the state of physical infrastructural safeness. Chemeli, Mwongeli, and Barmao (2015) noted that even though the government has attempted to address safety problems in schools (such as accidents, injuries, damage to property, and student deaths) using Safety Standards Manual, the extent to which implementation of the guidelines has not yet been established. Consequently, various studies have been conducted to understand crisis preparedness and safety standards in schools across the globe. In Kansas US, Hill (2015) analyze the readiness level of administrators and schools to respond to major crisis situations and identify to what extent collaboration is occurring between first responders and school administrators. A quantitative research design with descriptive analysis using survey methods was utilized for this study. Findings from the study indicated that the majority (70.7%) of K-8 administrators in Kansas perceived they were prepared for a crisis and have benefited from the crisis preparedness training they had received.

Robertson (2017) qualitative, collective case study is to examine the preparedness of principals who have experienced low to mid-level crisis in urban high schools in a

Large Urban School District (LUSD). Through the use of interviews, focus groups, and document analyses, the study finds principal preparation programs focus less on crisis management training and more on the principal as the educational leader. the study acknowledged principals' access to crisis management training at the district level, but principals expressed concern about the lack of crisis management training at the school level.

Daughtry (2015) surveyed principals in the low country region of South Carolina to assess their perceived preparedness for, and experiences of, crisis events in their schools. The population of this study consisted of acting principals in the South Carolina low country. A final sample size of 35 participants completed an on-line survey. Although more than 70% of the principals who participated in the study had experienced a significant crisis event, only half of the participants believed they were sufficiently prepared for such an event. Although nearly all of the principals had received training on crisis intervention, nearly half believed they needed additional training to be sufficiently prepared for such an event.

In Tanzanian Nkya (2013) examined the management of crises secondary schools. The population for the study included students, teachers and educational managers. The questionnaire and the interviewing methods were adopted in collecting information for the study. The study revealed that, there were patterns of crises in Tanzanian secondary schools caused by administrative, social and academic problems. The study also showed that crises that arise in Tanzania secondary schools had effects on academic, administrative, discipline and environment of the schools.

In Kenya, Muthwii, Telewa, and Nderitu (2015) examined schools' safety precautions, the security standards implemented by schools' management to assure

students' and workers' safety, schools' disaster mitigation strategies, and understand schools' community perception of the likelihood of disaster. Findings of this study showed that the majority of the participants there was a high likelihood of disaster happening anytime in their schools. Even though they strongly perceived the possibility of a disaster, the school heads reported that their schools were not adequately prepared to deal with crises situations or an impending disaster (Muthwii et al., 2015). It was further revealed that the scout's movement was not adequately trained to deal with crises situations. Additionally, the school heads emphasised that safety of their school community needs to be given more attention security resources in their schools. Moreover, the absence of a safety committee in schools and the absence of plans for dealing with crises (Muthwii et al., 2015).

A study by Mutisya and Mberia (2018) sought to determine the impact of deal response in the management of students' discipline. The results of the study revealed that public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County are faced with a various crisis, such as strikes, break-ins, students' sicknesses, power outage, and water scarcity. It was also established that how teachers address crises in school affects students' discipline. Some of the factors that should be taken into consideration when responding to crises in schools include the impact of the issue on the learners, ability to rectify the issue, the magnitude of the risk involved, the acceptance level of the problem, the stakeholders' awareness level, and student welfare.

Another study by Muoki (2017) explored the influence of school heads' training on security management in public secondary schools. It was established that the majority of the secondary school heads are rarely trained on effective ways of handling insecurity within their schools. However, school heads that were well-equipped with

security management skills are more likely to reduce injuries in schools. Similarly, principals who are skilled in security management are more likely to ensure learner safety in their schools. Additionally, low injury rates were reported in schools whose principals were experienced in security management. Moreover, it was found that schools, where principals have undergone frequent and rigorous trainings on security management within secondary schools, are less likely to witness the destruction of property.

Migiro (2012) investigated the implementation of the recommended safety standards in public Secondary Schools in Borabu District, Kenya. The study using survey design targeted all the 21 public secondary schools in Borabu District, Nyamira County, Kenya. Stratified random sampling method was used to select the required sample of 11 public secondary schools. The findings of the study revealed that most public secondary schools in Borabu District, Kenya were aware of the existing MOE safety standards, but majority of the schools had not implemented them fully. The study revealed that the status of school safety was wanting, and that the public secondary schools that tried to implement the MOE safety standards.

Simiyu et al. (2013) looked at how prepared our learning institutions are in fighting instances of fire outbreaks. Descriptive survey research design was used. The study targeted all learners in primary and secondary schools, teachers, school administrators, Boards of Management (BOM)/School Management Committees (SMCs), Chiefs, Sponsors and education officials. It was found out that learning institutions were not sufficiently prepared to handle disasters or emergency situations. Mururi (2014) study was to establish common disasters, preparedness and management in secondary school in Ruiru Division, Kiambu County, Kenya. A

descriptive cross-sectional study was used. Out of the target population a hundred and twenty (120) respondents were selected from the students, teachers and the support staff. The respondents did not know how to use the first aid kit elements. Lack of knowledge on use of first aid elements was significantly high among the respondents which also reflected lack of skills to manage minor incidences. The respondents confessed the lack of preparedness for disasters in their schools.

Chemeli et al. (2015) sought to explore the state of physical infrastructural safeness in Kenyan secondary schools. Findings showed that secondary schools in Kenya lack safety preparedness. For example, despite having the Safety Standard Manual showing fire and emergency procedures, the majority of the schools were reported to be inadequately prepared for fire. In most of the schools sampled for the study, none had fire extinguishers in recommended places. In the few schools that had fire extinguishers, there was no evidence that they were functional because they lacked signs of being serviced. Nearly 50% of the schools were also reported to lack a Crisis Plan thus limiting the capacity of schools to deal with emergencies. This study investigated whether secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County had communication crisis preparedness plans in place to address and manage them when they occur.

2.4 Effect of Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Secondary Schools

Historically, crisis preparedness has been focused mostly on events affecting the physical school structures. Further, Olsson (2014) noted that research on crisis communication has traditionally focused on private institutions and universities reputation and blame avoidance strategies. As a result, there is limited knowledge on

crisis communication from a public organizations and schools perspective. With changing times and new forms of crisis facing public education systems across the world, strategies for preparing for and handling crisis events, applies public relations strategies and tactics to prevent or modify the impact of a crisis on an organization, and minimizes damage (Hill, 2015).

Timing and accuracy of the information shared is critical for school leadership in making informed decisions when a critical incident occurs in the schools (Nelson, 2018). Crisis communication of school administrators following a crisis is also a crucial aspect of crisis management. Nelson (2018) advised that when information is shared that the there are no communication barriers prohibiting full disclosure of the details of the event. Missed information can be detrimental to an effective response to critical incidents that occur in schools (Nelson, 2018). In Nigeria, Owolabi and Ekechi (2014) explained that different channels are available for communicating disaster messages however; the effectiveness of the various channels varies depending on the nature of disaster, the region affected, the socio-economic status of the affected communities and particularly, the intended purpose of the message. It needs be re-emphasised that no one medium is all sufficient for this purpose, all are means to a common goal and any one can be used in combination with another to produce results. Although, the traditional electronic media, (radio and television) and the print media (newspapers and magazines) are very effective in communicating disaster warning to a large and diverse heterogeneous audience however, this is not without some drawbacks.

Empirical studies have been conducted to explore the role communication plays in various stages of crisis management. Snoeijers et al. (2014) experimentally tested the

use of Twitter and Facebook as crisis communication media at a university. They further observed the effects of the communication source (university or dean) and the crisis information (instructing or adapting) on secondary communication by the students (sharing the message and leaving a reaction). The role of the dean as an information source seemed to incite action by students. They also found some counterintuitive effects, particularly with regard to the type of crisis information communicated on Facebook or Twitter, by the dean or the university. The study departs from Snoeijers et al. (2014) whose research setting was universities to focus on public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County.

Williams (2019) findings indicate that approximately 40% of interviewees believe that communication behavior was the most critical component in a CCS. Methods of communication are varied and include a combination of technologies and behaviors. In addition, the majority of participants reported that internal decision making used by human agents in a CCS influences safety and security in an educational environment. Mayo (2015) examined current theory in how to prepare for, handle and communicate in a crisis. Interviews were conducted via email and in person, depending on the location of the school. The three Mississippi universities examined are The University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and The University of Mississippi. In their individual school histories, each of these schools has experienced major crises, which have damaged or challenged the university's reputation in the eyes of its publics. During all crises discussed, each university communicated and handled their crises in different manners depending on the scope of the particular situation.

Kelley (2014) determined if a significant difference existed between stakeholder groups and their perception of university reputation, responsibility for the crisis, and potential supportive behaviors toward the university following the university's response to a crisis. The participants were from 4 stakeholder groups associated with a regional public university: students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Results Revealed significant differences in the perceptions of reputation and in the potential supportive behaviors between staff and faculty and between staff and students. Staff perceived the reputation more favorably and had more favorable potential supportive behaviors than both the faculty and the student stakeholder groups. The results of this research provided empirical evidence that distinct stakeholder groups do perceive crisis response strategies differently.

In Punjab Pakistan, Javed and Niazi (2015) analyzed the preparedness and response to crises in school education department at secondary level. For collection of data a detailed questionnaire for DEOs, Heads and Teachers was used in nine sampled districts out of 36 (25%) of the Punjab. it was revealed that at administration and management (DEOs & Head) level the practices of crisis management remained satisfactory. The school administration carries the practices in normal way. No concept of creating awareness among the students about crisis. No proper system of crisis response team, training and other measures were not found, which are very important for safety and security of the students and staff.

In Nigeria, Nakpodia (2010) investigated the extent to which communication affects administration of secondary schools in Delta State. It is a survey study based on ex-post facto design. The target of the population of the study was 320 public secondary school principals and 9608 teachers in the state. The study found out that there was a

significant difference in the influence of communication on the administration of secondary schools Onyango (2013) examined disaster awareness and preparedness of secondary schools in Homa Bay County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted 52 principals, 420 secondary schools teachers and 6,000 students. 52 principals were purposively selected for the study, 84 teachers and 600 students were sampled for the study. The findings of the study revealed that secondary schools in Homa Bay County are faced with a variety of disasters with varying magnitudes most of which are floods-related. Low extent of planning for disaster awareness attributed to rare planning and attendance of workshops and seminars on disaster awareness given that 81.4% of teachers had never attended these workshops. It also established that crucial disaster awareness information materials such as school safety manuals were not available in most schools

Mbui (2016) established that communication plays a vital role in crisis management. Specifically, it was found that communication needs to be useful because it can elicit a negative or positive response. Mbui discovered that effective communication helps to protect the organisation's image and restore stakeholders' confidence. Communication brings organisational members together and that an organisation cannot manage or solve a crisis without communication. Mbui (2016) found out that most of the respondents were unaware of the existence of communication policy. However, some of them knew that communication policy is vital in guiding the dissemination of information to the institutions' stakeholders. Regarding the effectiveness of communication policy in disseminating information, the participants indicated that policy provides guidelines to the stakeholders concerning the institutions' expectations concerning communication issues. Moreover, several factors were found to affect the implementation of a crisis management plan. These factors

included awareness about the institution's crisis management plan, the importance of a crisis management plan, stakeholder reactions during a crisis episode, the effectiveness of the internet, coherence and consistency in crisis management, the effectiveness of a crisis management plan, and effectiveness of a strategic plan (Mbui, 2016). Lastly, the factors that affected crisis communication include persuasiveness of the message, perception, timing of the message, and presence of a crisis management team.

Mutisya and Mberia (2018) examined the influence of deal response in the management of students discipline in Public secondary schools in Thika West Sub-County. The study found that the public secondary schools are faced with crisis revolving around food and water shortage, power blackout, fire outbreak, sicknesses, break-ins/theft and strikes. The study concludes that deal response influences the management of students discipline in Public secondary schools. Kaluki (2019) sought to examine the influence of school principals' communication strategies on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kisasi Sub-County, Kitui County. Kenya. The target population for this study was 20 principals, 140 teachers who consisted of 20 deputy principals, 20 heads of departments, guidance and counseling, 20 form four class teachers and 20 presidents of the students' council. During these assemblies, it was reported by all the respondents that the principals communicated to the students mostly about discipline issues. The study concluded that most of the principals' communication strategies could help in reducing most of the students' related indiscipline issues.

Birya (2020) examined the role of communication in crisis management in institutions of higher learning in Kenya, focusing on Daystar University students' crisis (unrest)

of 2017 and 2018. The study found that the students' crisis was caused by different factors, including random fee hikes, lack of value for money, lack of transparency, poor facilities at the university, and autocratic management. The findings pointed to the role of communication in crisis management in helping to reduce and contain harm, provide specific information to stakeholders, manage image and perception, initiate and enhance recovery, and explain and justify actions.

2.5 Review of Relevant Theories for Crises Management

This study was guided by situational communication theory, attribution theory and stakeholder theory to explain the relationship between independent and dependent variable.

2.5.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The SCCT was put forward by Timothy Coombs in 2007. The SCCT refers to an all-inclusive, prescriptive, and contextual approach to crisis response and protection of institutional reputation (Coombs, 2012). The theory posits that those tasked with the management of crisis ought to ensure that strategic crisis responses match the level of crisis responsibility and the threat the crisis poses towards the reputation of the organisation. The SCCT is known for its context-dependedness as it states that the response strategy chosen and implemented by an organisation depends on the crisis (van Rensburg, Conradie, & Dondolo, 2017).

The theory emphasises that ten crisis response strategies can be categorized into four broad classes (Kyrychok, 2017). First, deny response strategies attempt to delink any connection that associates the organisation to the crisis. Second, diminish response strategies are aimed at reducing the organisation's link to the crisis or focused on reducing negative stakeholders' perception regarding the crisis. This strategy is aimed

at reducing the harmful impact of the crisis on the organisation. Third, deal response strategies attempt to enhance the reputation of the organisation by providing aid (symbolic/material) to those affected by the crisis. Fourth, bolstering plans are secondary response techniques utilised to improve the impact of the three main strategies (Coombs, 2012).

In the Kenyan context, schools have witnessed many crises situations linked to students' indiscipline. Some of these crises include strikes which have led to arson, destruction of school property, injuries, and deaths (National Crime Research Centre, 2017). Another current crisis is bullying. Because of the adverse impact of these crises on students, teachers, and school property, there is a high likelihood that crucial stakeholders will lose confidence in the affected schools if there is no appropriate communication strategy during times of crisis. Such a communication approach would help address fears and bolster confidence among school stakeholders in case a crisis occurs (Owolabi & Ekechi, 2024).

The SCCT provides a framework that can be utilised in the choice of deal response strategies to address the management of crises in schools. The SCCT looks at how a crisis situation that occurs in education institutions influences response strategies and how those response strategies affect the outcomes of the crisis (Coombs, 2012). This theory is useful since it suggests that the at both stages of crises; pre-crisis stage, the crisis event stage and the post crisis stage, communication is key to ensure that concerned stakeholders are aware on what procedure to take when such event occur (van Rensburg, et al, 2017). Hence, the way crisis communication is conducted in schools determines how the stakeholders would receive and react to it.

In relation to this investigation, SCCT provide a structure on how communication practices can be used in crisis preparedness in secondary school setting. The SCCT outlines the strategy that institutions can use to communicate with stakeholders within the school with regard to crisis response. Furthermore, the SCCT helps the schools design the communication channels preferred by school stakeholders in crisis communication whether it is through SMS alerts, use of internet among other channels. Through activation of various messages of communication, it helps stakeholders to protect themselves from a crisis happening in their schools. This is through the school having system in place to provide information about the crisis, provide counselling services and take corrective action.

2.5.2 Attribution Theory

This study was also guided by attribution theory developed by Australian psychologist Fritz Heider (1958). Heider coined attribution theory in the 1950s and modified by Floyd et al. (2017). Attribution is an internal (thinking) and external (talking) process of interpreting and understanding what is behind our own and others behaviours. This theory attempts to explain and describe the mental and communicative process involved in everyday explanations (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). This theory is concerned with 'how' and the 'what' by which individuals' process information in an attempt to understand events, judge those events and act on those events.

This theory fits in communication practice field as it links how schools communicate with their stakeholders (students, teachers, board of management members, parents, local authorities, ministry of education officials and neighbouring community) in a crisis situation. The kind of communication related by the institutions may influence

the meaning of action and how one may respond to it. Heider argued that individuals are active interpreters of the events which occur in their lives and they use consistent and logical modes of sense making in their interpretations (Floyd et al., 2017). According to Manusov and Spitzberg (2008), attributions can assist to explain communication behaviour by helping one to understand the diversity of meanings that individuals provide to any communication activity like; control, stability, responsibility and causal locus.

According to Weiner (1986), different combinations of the above dimensions lead to different conclusions about what something means. The theory has been used as a robust conceptual foundation for assessment of the impact of crisis message strategies in organisations. The theory posits that in a crisis, situations affect the choice of communication strategies. Additionally, according to the theory, people are likely to look for the causes of events that are detrimental, unanticipated, and important (Weiner, 1986). Weiner suggested that there are three causal dimensions of attribution that influence how people evaluate organisational responsibility for a crisis in ways that can be predicted.

The responsibility of an educational institution during crisis situation is seen as most reliable if the cause shows stability; that is if the organisation has witnessed a history of the crisis in the past. Additionally, a crisis is linked to an organisation if the organisation is under external control (controlled by individuals who are not part of the institution) is low, and there is a strong internal locus. Such attributions suggest that the organisation ought to have prevented the crisis and implemented effective preventive strategies (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008).

In relation to this study, school fire and bullying crisis fit the three causal dimensions. First, because both of these crises are discipline-related, they have been a continuous occurrence primarily attributed to the schools' ability to manage discipline. Second, discipline-related emergencies are non-attributable to external factors but internal factors that should be under the full control of the administration. Consequently, the occurrence of such crisis implies that the school administration has failed to manage discipline - which adversely affects the image of the school. When schools have frequent cases of crises, there is an increased likelihood that stakeholders will lose confidence in it. The negative image negatively affects future interactions between the public and the school. Consequently, attribution theory can be used to choose effective crisis response strategies focused on altering causal attributions or affect feelings linked to these attributions to minimise reputational damage.

2.5.3 Stakeholder Theory

This research was also anchored by Freeman stakeholder theory (Ndiela, 2019). In education setting, stakeholders consist of government, principals, board of management, parents, students, teachers, suppliers and sponsors among other entities. Therefore in case of crisis, all stakeholders have a role to play for the matter to be addressed or necessary action to be taken. Freeman and Reed (1983) described that stakeholder theory as that action (any) taken by management has to be made in consideration of the organisation's stakeholders.

The stakeholders according to Freeman were classified into two; narrow sense of stakeholder and wide sense of stakeholder. Narrow sense stakeholders consist of primary stakeholders which an institution is dependent for its survival. Whereas the wide sense stakeholder consist of individual (s) who may affect the attainment of

organisation's objectives or the ones who is affected by the attainment of organisation goals (Freeman & Reed, 1983).

This theory is essential to consider in a school crisis situation, since it is an event that can harm such stakeholders (directly and indirectly). Moreover, a crisis often raise question about the institution responsibility towards its stakeholder (Alpaslan, Green & Mitroff, 2009). They argued that more emphasis on stakeholders may help institutions to recover from crises more successfully. This is dependent on the institutions assumption and knowledge about their stakeholders. Hence, when a crisis happens, the pattern through which primary and secondary stakeholders receive information is vital. Some institutions need to craft a communication strategy detailing how each party would receive information in case a crisis happens (Ndiela, 2019). Therefore, this research sought to establish how communication practices were used to dispense information to various stakeholders of public secondary schools during crisis situations.

Stakeholder theory under crisis preparedness stresses the significance of establishing mutually beneficial relations with stakeholders that focuses on essential objective of institutional responsibility. These standards of institutional responsibility have to meet stakeholders' expectations before a crisis. Stronger stakeholders relations will not help a school avoid crisis but can perform an essential function in how the school resolve a crisis it cannot avoid (Qingchun. 2017). The aim of establishing stakeholder relations is because of vested interest that they have to school success and would provide varied support during crisis. Additionally, stakeholders are normally affected negatively by school crisis if it occurs and may withdraw their students from the schools if stakeholders' relations are not strong.

In conclusion to the review of the three theories, it has been found that all of them are significant since they address specific areas of crisis preparedness in schools. Firstly, situational crisis communication theory is linked to the study variables as it portrays the influence of crisis response strategies to avert the negative effects of a crisis which can have devastating effect on schools. The second theory happens at a time when communication channels have been used to relay specific information on a crisis and focuses on how the receivers process the information in order to make judgement. The third theory of stakeholder involvement is not communication oriented but expects that all stakeholders in an educational institution should be made aware of the events happening within the shortest time possible and using the effective delivery medium.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed theoretical and empirical literature relating to the study topic on crisis communication preparedness in secondary schools. The review has looked on the theoretical literature related to the study variables. Further, the conceptual and empirical literature has been done which has shown that research gaps do exist in relation to communication practices and crisis preparedness level in schools.

Patterns of crisis have been recorded across secondary schools not only in Kenya but other neighbouring countries like Tanzania as well (Nkya, 2013) affecting academic performance of many schools. Birya (2020) said that crises in educational institutions were mainly caused by increased school fees hike, lack of transparency, dictatorial management and poor facilities in schools. Mutisya and Mberia (2018) research found out that strikes, break in thefts, sicknesses, fire outbreak, and power blackout and water shortage were some of the crisis that public secondary schools in Thika Sub

County faced. With the crisis happening in education institutions, it is expected that response strategies are affected to prevent (preparedness) and manage crises in schools.

The research reviewed has shown that various institutions apply various methods to address crisis once they occur. The research by Birya (2020) found out that communication channels (social media, mainstream media, phone calls, written communication and face to face meetings) were applied to mitigate crisis at Daystar University. Birya study was conducted at one higher education institutions while the present study focused on public secondary schools in West Pokot Sub County. Mutisya and Mberia (2018) found out that deal response strategy was applied in management of crises in schools. The gap created from the reviewed study stems from contextual and conceptual point of view as inadequate focus has been on how communication practices are applied for crisis preparedness. Research seems to focus on how communication practices are applied once crisis occurs and not before they occur. This research focus is more on preventive than reactive where communication practices are undertaken to warn and create awareness on what students, teachers and administrators need to do to avert crises from happening or escalating.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and design procedures followed in answering research questions. The chapter covers the research design, study area, philosophical stance and sampling methods. Further, the tools for data collection are described, reliability and validity determination approaches are discussed, and data collection procedures are provided together with the methods of presentation and analysis of data. Lastly, the ethical issues that the research adhered to are described.

3.2 Research Design

The study utilised descriptive research design. This design addresses how, where, when, what, and who questions and how they are linked to the phenomenon of interest to the study or the research problem (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). A descriptive research study is crucial in obtaining information regarding the current status of a phenomenon of interest and in describing "what exists" concerning the variables of interest to the study (Sacred Heart University Library, 2019). In a descriptive study, the respondents are observed in their natural or unchanged environment. That is, unlike experimental studies which involve the manipulation of the independent or predictor variables, thus adversely influencing the normal behaviour of the participants, this research design does not affect participants' behaviour (Polit & Beck, 2014). .

The descriptive design involves the collection of data through interviews, administration of questionnaires to participants or conducting observations (Babbie, 2015). This design support collection of data using quantitative and qualitative

approaches. There are various reasons why the descriptive study was chosen for this research. First, as a non-experimental research design, it is useful when human characteristics or variables cannot be experimentally manipulated. Specifically, in the proposed study, respondents' preparedness and response to school crisis cannot be assessed in experimental conditions. In the study of crisis preparedness and response, it would be unethical to simulate a crisis in schools because of the physical and psychological harm to the students and school workers. A descriptive research study was appropriate because the emphasis is on the ordinary experiences of humans rather than manipulation of their situations.

3.3 Philosophical Approach

Research paradigm refers to a general array of believes   which directs research and is accepted in a specific research (Babbie, 2015). Kumar (2014) argued that a research paradigm can fall under interpretivism (qualitative), positivism (quantitative), or pragmatism (which integrates various methods like quantitative, qualitative and action research in one). This research followed a pragmatism philosophical approach. Creswell (2014) suggest that researchers should consider utilising mixture of approaches that works best in real situations. Based on the purpose and objectives of this study, it was important to combine various approaches that embrace qualitative and quantitative approaches to which pragmatism is centred on.

3.4 Study Area

The proposed study was delimited to Kapenguria Sub-County in West Pokot County. The Sub-County (also known as Kapenguria constituency) is one of the Sub Counties of the larger West Pokot County in the North Rift region of Kenya. Kapenguria Sub-County has 36 public secondary schools spread in four divisions; Kapenguria, Sook,

Kongelai and Mnagei. Kapenguria Sub-County was chosen because it has recorded several crises in the past involving public secondary schools.

3.5 Study Population

The target population for this study consisted of all principals, teachers and student leaders of all 36 public secondary schools within Kapenguria Sub-County. From these schools, 36 principals, 36 teachers and 36 student council leaders (presidents) formed the target population for the study. The principals were targeted to provide information on how communication activities are done during times of crisis in their schools. Teachers were targeted to provide detailed information on the kind of crisis that their schools have experienced or likely to experience, the level of preparedness towards crisis, extent to which communication types have been applied for managing a certain crisis and challenges that they experience. Moreover, the students were targeted to provide information how they will communicate if a crisis occur in their school. The breakdown of the study population is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Target Population for the Study

	Respondent	Number
1	Principals	36
2	Teachers	368
3	Student council leaders	36
	Total	**440**

Source: Sub-County Education Office (2020)

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

This section describes the sample size and sampling procedures used.

3.6.1 Sampling Procedures

The respondents (principals, teachers and student leaders) were selected through probability sampling method. A probability sampling technique refers to any sampling approach that uses random selection. For a random selection of potential participants to be realised, the researcher must set up some procedure that ensures that all potential participants have equal chances of being in the final sample. There are various probability sampling approaches, such as systematic random sampling, multistage sampling, cluster sampling, stratified sampling, and simple random sampling.

The study utilized simple random sampling in selection of both principals and teachers of Kapenguria Sub-County public secondary schools. Simple random sampling referred to a primary sampling method involving the selection of a group of respondents (a sample) from the target population by random chance. Therefore, each of the potential participants has equal opportunities of being in the final sample.

The researcher first wrote the number of principals (36) on a piece of paper and then put the pieces in a trough. The researcher thoroughly mixed the pieces of paper and then drew one by one without choosing but randomly until the desired sample of 33 was attained. The same procedure was taken when choosing the teachers and student leaders. This method of sampling ensured that each respondent has an equal chance of being selected for the study.

3.6.2 Sample Size

Considering that the number of principals and teachers is high, a sample was undertaken. Various methods and formulas can be used to establish the sample size for a given population. To reduce sampling errors, the sample size was determined

through use of Cochran formula. This method permits calculation of ideal sample size given a desired level of precision, desired confidence level and the estimated proportion of the attribute present population. The formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where,

n is the desired sample size

N is the finite population, which are 368 teachers and 36 principals (separately) employees

e is the margin error/ level of precision taken as 0.05

The formula can be substituted as for teachers:

$$n = \frac{368}{1+368(0.05^2)} = 191.6 \text{ teachers}$$

The sample size for principals and student council leaders were:

$$n = \frac{36}{1+36(0.05^2)} = 33.3 \text{ each for student (33) council and principals (33)}$$

Therefore the final sample size for this study consisted of 192 teachers, 33 principals and 33 student council leaders.

3.7 Data Types and Data Collection Instruments

3.7.1 Data Types and Sources of Data

Data collection for this study came from internal and external sources. External sources of data mainly came from publications whereas the internal documents came from secondary schools that were studied in West Pokot County. In collection of data from internal sources (primary data), qualitative and quantitative data was collected to enable the research have a robust and in-depth understanding of how communication practices affected crisis preparedness in public secondary schools.

3.7.2 Data Collection Instruments

Data in this study was collected using a questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire mainly collects quantitative data whereas interview collects mainly qualitative information.

The questionnaire for this study was administered to sampled teachers of public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. The decision to use questionnaire is that it enabled the collection of large amounts of data from many individuals within a short time and in a cost-effective manner. Second, data collection using questionnaires could be carried out by a researcher or research assistant with minimal impact on its validity and reliability. Third, data collected from questionnaires could be easily quantified by the researcher or through the use of computer software.

The questionnaire was structured into the objectives of the study. Section A consisted of demographic details of teachers, Section B contained questions on crisis in secondary schools and Section C involved questions on communication processes and activities in schools. Section D contained the way various communications is applied to manage different kinds of crisis in schools. The last part contains questions on challenges influencing crisis communication preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County. Majority of questions were closed ended but a few had open ended questions to gather more information from respondents.

The interview schedule for this study was prepared for secondary school principals and student leaders from Kapenguria Sub-County. The interview questions were semi structured to allow probing of more questions during interviews but following the study objectives. Further, the interview seeks to gather information from principals with their experience in managing crisis, communication means used during crisis

period, the effect of communication on crisis management in their schools and challenges that they encounter.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

3.8.1 Validity

The study tested the validity of the research instrument using content validity measure. The most important form of validity that every instrument must possess is content validity referring to the degree to which items in a data collection instrument measure or represents the trait that a researcher is interested in measuring (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). Content validity can be accomplished by involving subject matter experts (experts in the topic being studied) in reviewing the questionnaire items to determine their relevance in addressing the phenomenon of interest to the study. Consequently, supervisors who are experts in the area of research helped in validating the instruments through expert judgment.

Apart from seeking the help of panel experts in validating the questionnaire, a pre-test involving five principals was carried in schools that were not involved in the sample in West Pokot County involving 3 mixed, 1 boys and 1 girls secondary schools. The pre-test is aimed at gauging the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire items so that those that are found not to measure the variables adequately were either be discarded or modified to enhance the quality of the instrument.

3.8.2 Reliability

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the test-retest method was used. This method involves the administration of the same instrument twice to the same group of individuals and determining the scores at both times (Jones et al., 2015). In this case, the reliability of the instrument is the correlation between the scores from Time 1 and

Time 2. If the scores are consistent at Time 1 and Time 2, they show similarity. When using test-retest reliability, a researcher should wait until the respondents do not remember how they answered the questionnaire items the first time they completed the questionnaire. However, it should not be so long that their knowledge of the issues addressed in the instrument change. A time frame of between one and two weeks between administrations of the two tests is recommended in the test-retest method (Patten & Newhart, 2017). If the correlation coefficient between Test 1 and Test 2 scores is more than 0.80, then the instrument has excellent reliability (Mohan, 2016). A reliability value of 0.863 was obtained for the research questionnaire which made the instrument to be reliable.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sought a letter of introduction from Moi University. Using this letter, the researcher applied for a research permit to conduct the study from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). After obtaining the research permit, the researcher sought permission to carry out the study in Kapenguria Sub-County from the County Commissioner of Education (Kapenguria Sub-County) and Sub-County Director of Education, West-Pokot Sub-County. Following this, the researcher booked appointments with the participants of the schools picked for the study.

Upon arrival at the schools, the researcher established rapport with each of the respondents and explained to them the aim of the study. The respondents were given a chance to ask any question about the research and sought any further clarification. The respondents were assured that their anonymity would be maintained during data collection and analysis. Next, the study issued the teachers with self-report

questionnaires. The respondents were given thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire. After that, the completed questionnaire was collected. For interview, an appointment was made in advance with the 33 principals sampled. Thereafter, interview was conducted in their offices where the researcher recorded the responses through note taking. For student leaders, interviews was taken during lunch and break time in their classes. The interview sessions lasted for 10 minutes for each student leader and 15 minutes for each principal in their respective offices.

3.10 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data analysis was performed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Initially, the data collected was arranged according to qualitative and quantitative forms. Quantitative data from questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics. Data coding and entry of responses from the questionnaires was performed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS 26.0). Descriptive analysis of data was done using frequencies and percentages. The frequencies showed the total number of participants who agreed with a particular statement on the questionnaire and their level of agreement. On the other hand, percentages showed the proportion of participants who agreed with each of the responses to the questionnaire items.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview data (transcripts). This is process that results in the documentation of patterns or themes in qualitative data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic analysis is comprised of six phases. In the first step, the researcher undergoes data familiarisation. A researcher familiarises himself or herself with the data by thoroughly reading all the transcripts. The second step involves the generation of codes through the systematic and meaningful organisation of data. Coding reduces massive amounts of data into small portions. Specifically, open

coding was used to code the data as no pre-established codes were used. Instead, codes were developed as the process of data analysis continued. The third phase involved the search for themes through merging of similar codes to broader categories known as themes. In the fourth phase, the researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that all themes contained related information and that distinction can be made from one theme to another. In the fifth phase, the themes were discussed. Lastly, the sixth phase involved writing of the final report (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The results of data analysis were presented in tables, graphs and narrations.

3.11 Ethical Issues

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines from the university. First, before proceeding to the field for data collection, clearance was obtained from Moi University's Research and Ethics Committee. Specifically, through the supervisors, the university checked the research proposal to ensure adherence to research ethics governing studies involving human participants. After the proposal had been approved, a research permit to conduct the study was obtained from NACOSTI. After that, informed consent was sought from potential respondents requesting their participation in the study.

Informed consent is meaningful because it empowers the prospective respondents to make rational and informed decisions regarding their participation in the study (Kadam, 2017). In the informed consent form, efforts were made to ensure that the information regarding the research has been presented to the participants in a way that it can be easily comprehended. Consent was sought directly from the potential respondents because of their capacity to understand the information presented. Voluntariness was also a vital aspect of the study. This implied that none of the

potential participants was forced or coerced to participate in the study. Their participation in the study was based on the doctrine of free will. Even after the participants had indicated their willingness to participate, enrolled in the study, they were free to drop out at any phase of the study without giving out their reasons for doing so.

The study was conducted in confidentiality. Confidentiality refers to a condition in which a researcher knows all the information about the respondents but takes measures aimed at protecting their identity. Noteworthy, studies involving human participants need a collection of a signed consent agreement; thus, researchers are aware of the identity of the participants. Therefore, maintaining confidentiality is necessary to protect private information. Respondents' confidentiality was managed through the use of password protected files.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, interprets and discusses the results of data analysis on the influence of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya. The presentation of data follows the research objectives. The presentation is made from teachers' questionnaire, principals' interviews and students' leaders' interview outcomes. The response rate was 166 out of 192 for the teachers representing 86.5% response rate. For principals, a total of 20 of them were interviewed representing 60.6% and 25 student council leaders out of 33 were interviewed representing 75.75%. The presentation and interpretation of results is done concurrently with respect to the objectives of the study.

4.1.1 Demographic Information of Teachers

The teachers were asked to provide their demographic information based on gender, age, highest level of education and work experience as presented in Figure 4.1.
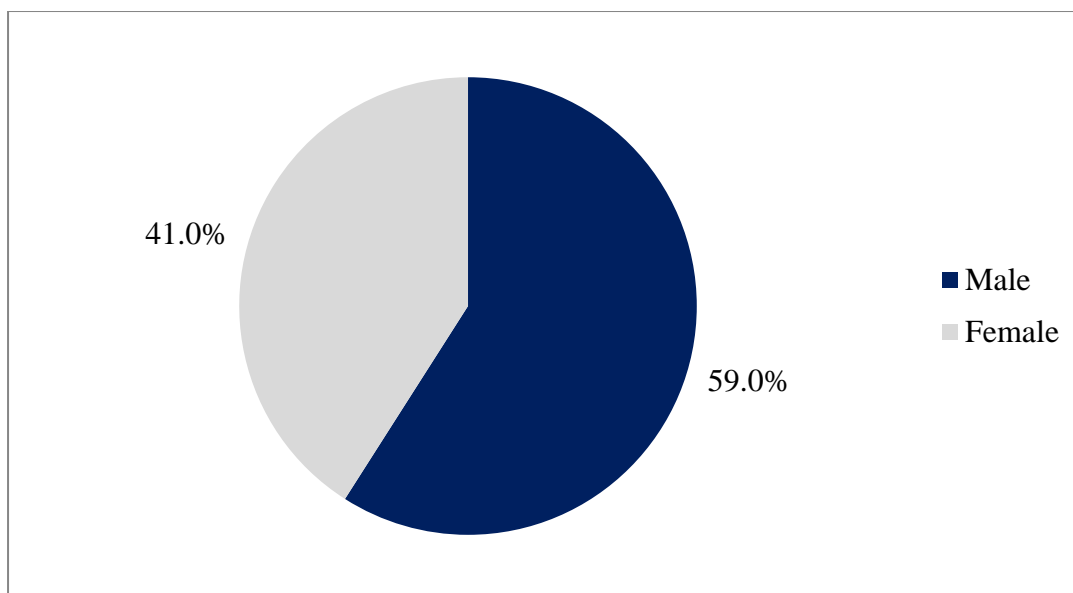
Figure 4.1 Distribution of Respondents According to Gender

Figure 4.1 results on gender show that 98 (59.0%) of teachers were male while 68 (41.0%) were female. On principals, 15 (75.0%) were male while 5 (25.0%) were female. The disparity in gender distribution for teachers and principals could be due to classification by the government for Kapenguria Sub-County as a hardship region which attracts more male than female teachers. With regard to student leaders, 17 (68.8%) were male while 32.0% were female. Nevertheless, the percentage of representations is fair in helping the study understand the dynamics of communication in crisis preparedness from both male and female teachers.

The teachers were also asked to indicate their age category and their responses are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Age of Teachers

Age category	Frequency	Percent
21-30yrs	67	40.4
31-40yrs	69	41.6
41-50yrs	24	14.5
51yrs & above	6	3.6
Total	166	100.0

Results on age category (Table 4.1) reveal that 67 (40.4%) were aged 21 – 30 years, 69 (41.6%) were aged 31 – 40 years, 24 (14.5%) were aged 41 – 50 years and 6 (3.6%) were aged 51 years and above. The results show that all categories of teachers irrespective of their ages were included in the research to understand their perspective with regard to communication practices and crisis preparedness.

The study also asked teachers to provide information on their highest level of education and results are provided in Figure 4.2.
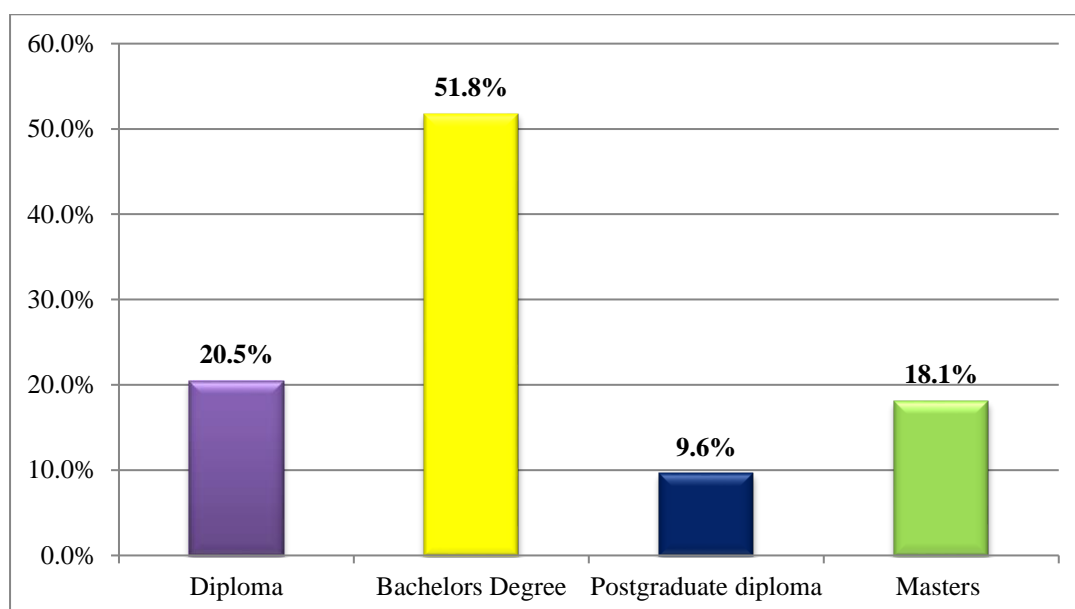
Figure 4.2 Education Level of Teachers

On the level of education, 34 (20.5%) had diploma, 86 (51.8%) had an undergraduate degree, 16 (9.6%) had a post graduate diploma and 30 (18.1%) had a masters level of education. This shows that all teachers teaching in the Sub-County had attained the minimum threshold required to teach in secondary schools according to TSC regulations.

The teachers were asked to provide information on how long they have been teaching in secondary schools. On their part, the principals were asked to indicate their work experience in their current position. Their response is provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Teachers Work experience

Experience	Frequency	Percent
5yrs and below	49	29.5
6-10yrs	77	46.4
11-15yrs	24	14.5
16yrs & above	16	9.6
Total	166	100.0

Results on work experience shows that 49 (29.5%) had worked for 5 years and below, 77 (46.4%) for a period between 6 – 10 years, 24 (14.5%) for a period of 11 – 15 years and 16 (9.6%) for a period of 16 year and above. This means that teachers have varied experience in teaching in secondary schools and this means that they are aware of how communication is used to address crisis issues in their school from happening and also once they happen. On their part, 6 principals reported that they had stayed in their current schools for more than 10 years, 7 for a period of 5 – 10 years and 7 said that they had stayed in their current school for less than 5 years. This means the principals are aware of different crisis that they have encountered and this study intends to get their opinion on how communication has shaped the way they respond to various crisis.

The researcher also requested the teachers to provide information with regard to category of their school. The results on school categories are presented in Figure 4.3
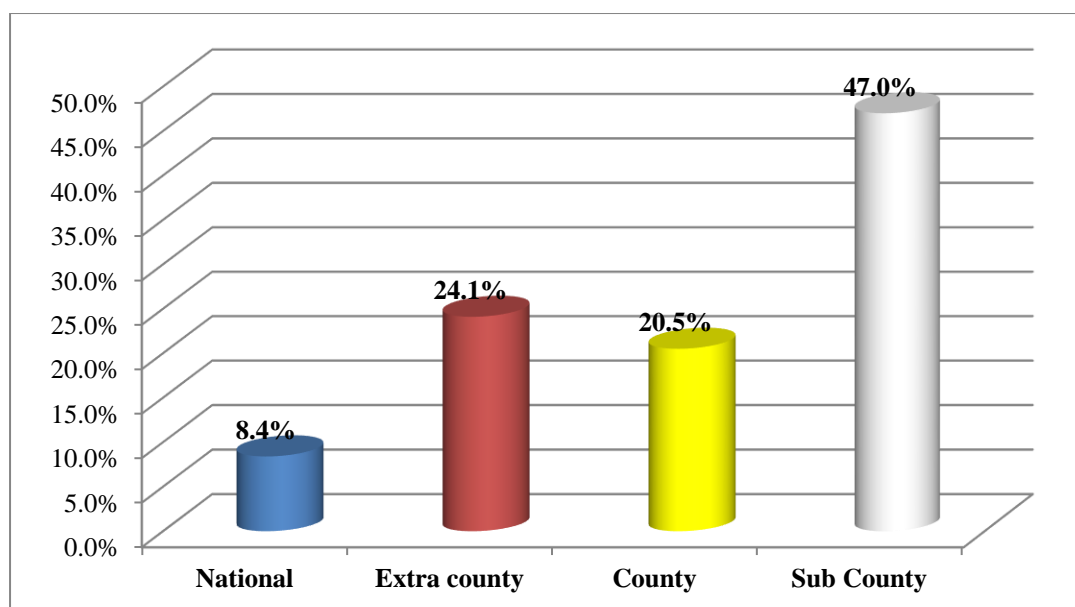
Figure 4.3 Categories of Schools that Participated in the Study

The school that were involved in the study were 8.4% national, 24.1% extra county, 20.5% county and 47.0% Sub-County public secondary schools. This means that all school categories were involved in the investigation.

Further, Table 4.3 shows the composition of schools that were involved in the study.

Table 4.3 Composition of Schools

Composition	Frequency	Percent
Boys	14	8.4
Mixed day/boarding	65	39.2
Girls	31	18.7
Mixed day	53	31.9
Mixed boarding	3	1.8
Total	166	100.0

With regard to students admitted into these schools, 14 (8.4%) were boys', 65 (39.2%) came from mixed day/boarding schools, 31 (18.7%) came from mixed day and 3 (1.8%) came from mixed boarding schools. Further, 12 of principals came from

mixed schools, 5 of principals were from girls boarding while 3 were from boys boarding schools. Hence, all categories of schools are represented in this study.

4.2 Communication Systems Used in Secondary Schools.

The study sought to know various communication platforms and media that were used in schools. Therefore, the teachers were asked to indicate how communication happened in their schools. Their responses are provided in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 How communication happen in secondary schools

Approach	Frequency	Percent
From top to bottom	96	57.8
From bottom to top	33	19.9
Diagonal/horizontal	37	22.3
Total	166	100.0

Results in Table 4.4 show that in many schools 96 (57.8%), communication was from top of the school management to the lower levels. Further, 33 (19.9%) of teachers reported that communication in their school was from bottom (lower level) to the top management level. Lastly, 37 (22.3%) of teachers indicated that communication approach in their school was through diagonal / horizontal formations. The results show that main communication approach used is the conventional top-bottom.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the person(s) responsible for information release in their schools on regular occasions to different stakeholders in case crisis happened in their schools. The results are presented in Figure 4.4.
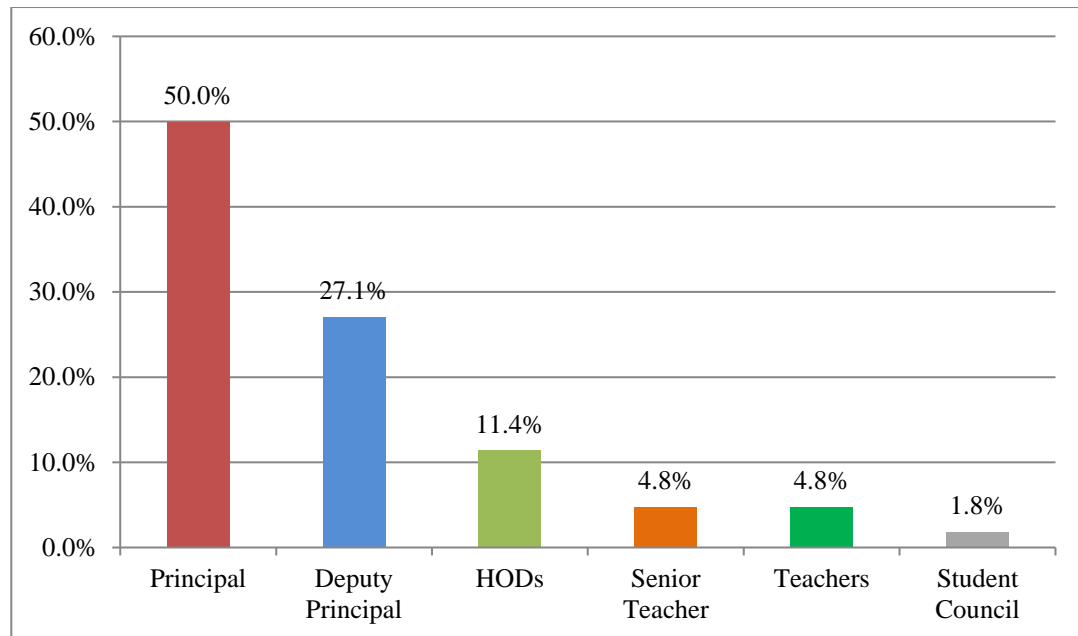
Figure 4.4 Persons in charge of communication in schools

Results show that as per findings in Table 4.5, communication on any crisis happening in schools begins at the principal down to the deputy, HODs, senior teachers, teachers and lastly student council members. This means that many schools rely on top-bottom approach when communicating in schools.

4.2.1 Communication Channels Available for Use in Schools

The teachers were asked to indicate whether various communication channels were in use in their schools or not. Their responses are given in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Communication Channels Available for Use in Schools

		Available		Unavailable
	Communication medium	**In use**	**Not in use**	
1	Landline phone	11 (6.6%)	50 (30.1%)	105 (63.3%)
2	Mobile phone	103 (62.0%)	17 (10.2%)	46 (27.7%)
3	Internet medium – email	54 (32.5%)	49 (29.5%)	63 (38.0%)
4	Short messaging service system	87 (52.4%)	23 (13.9%)	56 (33.7%)
5	Fire alarm	44 (26.5%)	44 (26.5%)	78 (47.0%)
6	Notice board	123 (74.1%)	23 (13.9%)	20 (12.0%)
7	School newspaper	30 (18.1%)	63 (38.0%)	73 (44.0%)
8	School website	47 (28.3%)	57 (34.3%)	62 (37.3%)
9	Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instangram)	91 (54.8%)	32 (19.3%)	43 (25.9%)
10	Public address system	71 (42.8%)	49 (29.5%)	46 (27.7%)
11	Face to face interactions	138 (83.1%)	14 (8.4%)	14 (8.4%)

Result in Table 4.5 show that various communication channels are available for use while others are unavailable in secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. Out of the 11 media that were investigated, the ones that were found to be in use as reported by teachers consisted of face to face interactions (83.1%), school notice board (74.1%), mobile phones (62.0%), social media accounts (54.8%) and short messaging service system (52.4%). The communication channels and appliances found not to be unavailable in secondary schools in the Sub-County were; landline phones (63.3%), fire alarms (47.0%), school newspaper (44.0%) and school email (38.0%). The above results show that schools have advanced in embracing new channels of communication while also sticking to conventional channels of communication like notice boards and public address systems. In some incidents, despite having landline phones, 30.1% of teachers reported that they were not in use in their schools.

In addition, 34.3% of teachers indicated that despite their school having a website, it is not in use to share and inform stakeholders' matters pertaining to schools. This coincides with Mayo's (2015) research among America universities that showed that institutions websites did not contain crisis management plan and information. Other media of communication use in schools were through weekly assemblies (13.3%), suggestions boxes (6.0%), letters (3.0%), Whatsapp (4.8%) and internal memo (2.4%). The above result shows that schools have a variety of communication appliances and medium to use to disseminate and receive information from its stakeholders.

4.3 Crises in Public Secondary Schools in Kapenguria Sub-County

The dependent variable for this study was to establish the level of crisis preparedness in by secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. The researcher wanted to know the various crises that secondary schools had experienced in the last three years by indicating their responses in a Likert scale of five; Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4) and Always (5). The results of analysis are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Crisis Prevalent in Secondary schools

	Crisis	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always		
1	Drug & substance abuse	18 (10.8%)	31 (18.7%)	67 (40.4%)	26 (15.7%)	24 (14.5%)	3.0422	1.1669
2	Theft incidents (staff and students)	26 (15.7%)	50 (30.1%)	61 (36.7%)	21 (12.7%)	8 (4.8%)	2.6084	1.0489
3	Bullying (students)	35 (21.1%)	51 (30.7%)	47 (28.3%)	21 (12.7%)	12 (7.2%)	2.5422	1.1682
4	Heavy wind	49 (29.5%)	34 (20.5%)	63 (38.0%)	13 (7.8%)	7 (4.2%)	2.3675	1.1135
5	Students fight/violence	43 (25.9%)	44 (26.5%)	63 (38.0%)	10 (6.0%)	6 (3.6%)	2.3494	1.0437
6	Fire (electricity)	74 (44.6%)	20 (12.0%)	37 (22.3%)	12 (7.2%)	23 (13.9%)	2.3373	1.4504
7	Lighting	65 (39.2%)	37 (22.3%)	33 (19.9%)	8 (4.8%)	23 (13.9%)	2.3193	1.3927
8	Exams cheating	71 (42.8%)	41 (24.7%)	37 (22.3%)	12 (7.2%)	5 (3.0%)	2.0301	1.1033
9	Student rampage (strike)	71 (42.8%)	41 (24.7%)	41 (24.7%)	7 (4.2%)	6 (3.6%)	2.0120	1.0842
10	Cattle rustling	87 (52.4%)	29 (17.5%)	31 (18.7%)	8 (4.8%)	11 (6.6%)	1.9578	1.2277
11	Flooding	91 (54.8%)	31 (18.7%)	32 (19.3%)	2 (1.2%)	10 (6.0%)	1.8494	1.1474
12	Arson (by students)	91 (54.8%)	30 (18.1%)	36 (21.7%)	3 (1.8%)	6 (3.6%)	1.8133	1.0651
13	Landslide	94 (56.6%)	34 (20.5%)	30 (18.1%)	2 (1.2%)	6 (3.6%)	1.7470	1.0309
14	Sexual abuse (rape, defilement)	93 (56.0%)	43 (25.9%)	25 (15.1%)	2 (1.2%)	3 (1.8%)	1.6687	.90379
							2.1889	1.1391

Results in Table 4.6 show that the most common crisis that secondary schools faced on occasional basis was drugs and substance abuse (40.4%), thefts incidents (36.7%) and bullying by students (28.3%). However, the study found out that the following crises were not common across public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County; arson by students (54.8%), landslides (56.6%) and sexual abuse (56.0%). From the results presented in Table 4.5, it is clear that the level of crisis prevalent in school

happened on rare occasions (M=2.18, SD=1.13). The standard deviation values are high which suggests that schools indeed do face crisis at different times in Kapenguria Sub-County.

During interview, the principals were asked to name the various crises that occurred in their schools. All of them (20) agreed that they had faced various forms of crisis but at different intensity levels. 3 said that the level of crisis in their schools as very high, 4 said that it was high, 7 said that it was low and 6 indicated that the intensity level of crisis in their schools was low. One principal No. 20 had this to say with regard to crisis that occurred in their schools.

> *Several form of crisis has been occurring in my schools in relation to bullying incidents, teachers' harassment, strikes, and destruction of school property. In terms of intensity, I can rate them to be on low level.*

Another Principal No. 9 from a mixed day secondary school mentioned the following:

> *From the time I was posted to these schools, we have faced various forms of crisis relating to disease outbreak, insecurity, food poisoning, power blackout and water shortage. Not all risks occur at a large scale but we are able to contain and address quickly before it/they escalate.*

Another principal No. 13 from a boarding secondary schools reported the following form of crisis has happened in their schools in the past.

> *Intruders to the school, theft, strong wind, insecurity, drugs and substance abuse, fires and bullying. I can confidently that some of the crisis that occurs naturally continues to pose a risk to the people in schools (wind and flooding).*

Whereas it was expected that schools in the Sub-County experience crisis and disasters associated with climate, environmental or physical conditions, this was not the case. Crisis associated with students appeared to be the challenges that face

secondary schools in the study area. This was supported by student leaders interviewed where 5 reported the level of crisis happening in their schools to be high, 12 said that it was moderate whereas 7 said that it was low. For those who reported that it was high, Student council leader No. 19 said the following:

> *We do experience various form of crisis in our schools on regular basis like students stealing from each other, breakages of lockers, bullying, abuse, drugs and substance abuse and absenteeism.*

Another Student Council leader No. 17 said that:

> *We have had fire incidents in our schools, theft in the school from members of the neighbouring community, disease outbreak, adverse weather, cheating in examinations and laboratories chemicals reactions.*

Other crisis that were reported by student council leaders to be occurring in schools (although at a small rate) included; insecurity, food shortages, water shortages, teenage pregnancies, extreme weather (high temperatures during the day) and psycho social issues that came as a result of prolonged school closure due to Covid 19 pandemic.

Further, the teachers were asked to indicate the preparedness of their schools towards management of crisis that were happening in their schools by use of the following scale: Extremely High (5), High (4), Moderate (3), Below Average (2) and Poor (1). The level of preparedness did not mean that these crises were in their schools but schools being prepared to handle them in case they happened. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Level of Preparedness in Handling Crises in Secondary Schools

	Crisis	Level of Preparedness					M	S.Dev
		Poor	Below average	Moderate	High	Very High		
1	Theft incidents (staff and students)	17 (10.2%)	12 (7.2%)	58 (34.9%)	47 (28.3%)	32 (19.3%)	3.3916	1.1794
2	Students fight/violence	22 (13.3%)	11 (6.6%)	62 (37.3%)	43 (25.9%)	28 (16.9%)	3.2651	1.2119
3	Bullying (students)	17 (10.2%)	24 (14.5%)	46 (27.7%)	58 (34.9%)	21 (12.7%)	3.2530	1.1635
4	Exams cheating	32 (19.3%)	13 (7.8%)	44 (26.5%)	39 (23.5%)	38 (22.9%)	3.2289	1.3997
5	Fire (electricity)	24 (14.5%)	22 (13.3%)	47 (28.3%)	40 (24.1%)	33 (19.9%)	3.2169	1.3077
6	Student rampage (strike)	29 (17.5%)	14 (8.4%)	57 (34.3%)	30 (18.1%)	36 (21.7%)	3.1807	1.3452
7	Drug & substance abuse	21 (12.7%)	22 (13.3%)	63 (38.0%)	28 (16.9%)	32 (19.3%)	3.1687	1.2487
8	Arson (by students)	19 (11.4%)	31 (18.7%)	55 (33.1%)	37 (22.3%)	24 (14.5%)	3.0964	1.2021
9	Sexual abuse (rape, defilement)	32 (19.3%)	23 (13.9%)	53 (31.9%)	31 (18.7%)	27 (16.3%)	2.9880	1.3256
10	Lighting	38 (22.9%)	27 (16.3%)	46 (27.7%)	40 (24.1%)	15 (9.0%)	2.8012	1.2849
11	Cattle rustling	33 (19.9%)	43 (25.9%)	58 (34.9%)	18 (10.8%)	14 (8.4%)	2.6205	1.1679
12	Heavy wind	36 (21.7%)	33 (19.9%)	64 (38.6%)	26 (15.7%)	7 (4.2%)	2.6084	1.1161
13	Landslide	53 (31.9%)	36 (21.7%)	47 (28.3%)	16 (9.6%)	14 (8.4%)	2.4096	1.2604
14	Flooding	60 (36.1%)	33 (19.9%)	40 (24.1%)	20 (12.0%)	13 (7.8%)	2.3554	1.2934
	Valid N (Listwise)						2.9703	1.2504

Results in Table 4.7 show that the schools level of crisis preparedness was high on addressing thefts incidents in schools (47.6%), addressing students' violence / fights (42.8%) and being prepared on incidents of bullying among students (47.6%). Whereas drugs and substance abuse was found to be the major crisis that secondary schools in West Pokot County faced, only 36.2% of teachers said that their schools were adequately prepared to handle the crisis.

The least areas where the level of preparedness was low in schools were on landslides (18.0%) and control of flooding (19.8%). This means that considering landslides and flooding are unpredictable, majority of schools were found to be less prepared to address the crisis. Overall, the level of preparedness by schools in handling crisis in Kapenguria Sub-County was found to be at average level ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.25$).

The principals were asked to indicate how prepared their schools were in responding to crisis happening in their schools during interview. Majority 14 said that they were well prepared in case a crisis happens, 4 said that they were moderately prepared and 2 said that they were least prepared to handle and manage crisis. Students' council leaders had different views in terms of crisis preparedness as 8 admitted that they were highly prepared, 12 said they were not prepared and 5 said that they were moderately prepared. This means that teachers, student council leaders and principals have different views with regard to crisis preparedness. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that not all schools crisis preparedness was high. One Student Council leader No. 22 mentioned the reason as to why crisis preparedness level was low in their school:

> *There is no much that we know or are made aware of with regard to how we should be prepared and react if crisis happens. We wait for the instructions from teachers and school administration.*

When teachers were asked to indicate why the level of preparedness for some crisis in their schools was low, 21 (12.7%) said that it was because those crises were not occurring frequently and 21 (12.7%) also said that they do not receive adequate support from the community to be prepared for crisis management. This puts majority of schools in vulnerable situation of loss in case a crisis occurs.

Other aspects mentioned by respondents to be the reasons for low level of preparedness were; poor management by schools (3.0%) and inadequate funds to construct the appropriate facilities and purchase the right facilities materials (10.8%). The respondents were asked whether the school management had made appropriate efforts to prepare and plan for the crisis. The results are given in Figure 4.1.
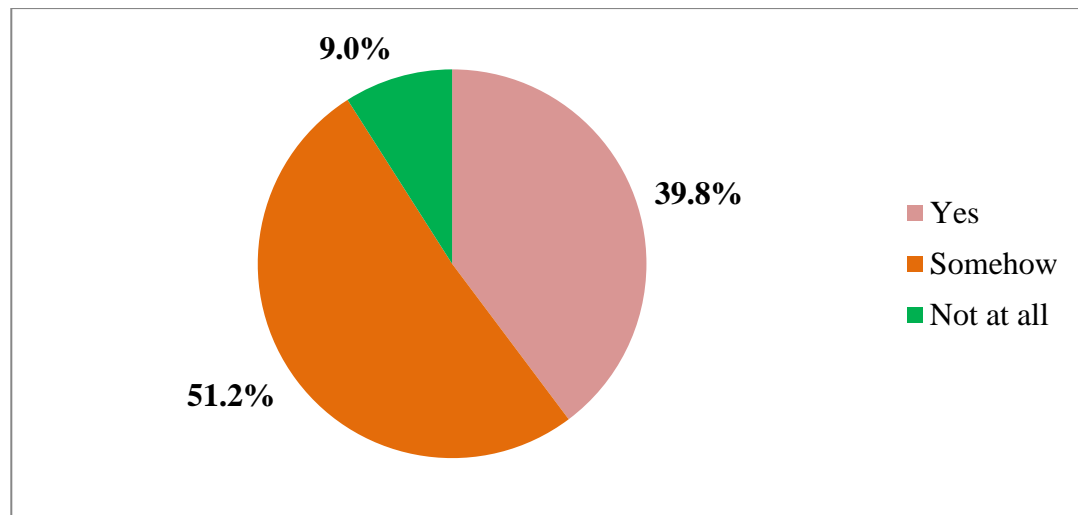
Figure 4.5 School Level of Planning and Preparation for Crisis

Results in Figure 4.5 show that 66 (39.8%) of teachers said that their schools had made appropriate plans for crisis management, 85 (51.2%) said they are somewhat prepared while 15 (9.0%) of schools management have not made any efforts to plan for crisis in their schools. This shows that not much has been done by the school management to be adequately prepared for crisis. The information was corroborated by principals interviewed where 12 said that they did not have a crisis preparedness plan and only 8 admitted to have. Students' council leader responses shows that most (17) were not aware of crisis preparedness plan exist in their schools whereas 8 of the student council leaders reported that they were somewhat aware.

The reasons given by the teachers for poor preparedness for crisis was due to poor communication skills by BOM (17.5%), lack of adequate resources (4.2%), lack of

proper training by BOM members (4.2%) and lack of clear crisis prepared guidelines and policies in schools (1.2%).

Further, teachers were asked to indicate if they had received proper training on crisis preparedness in their schools. Their responses are provided in Figure 4.6.
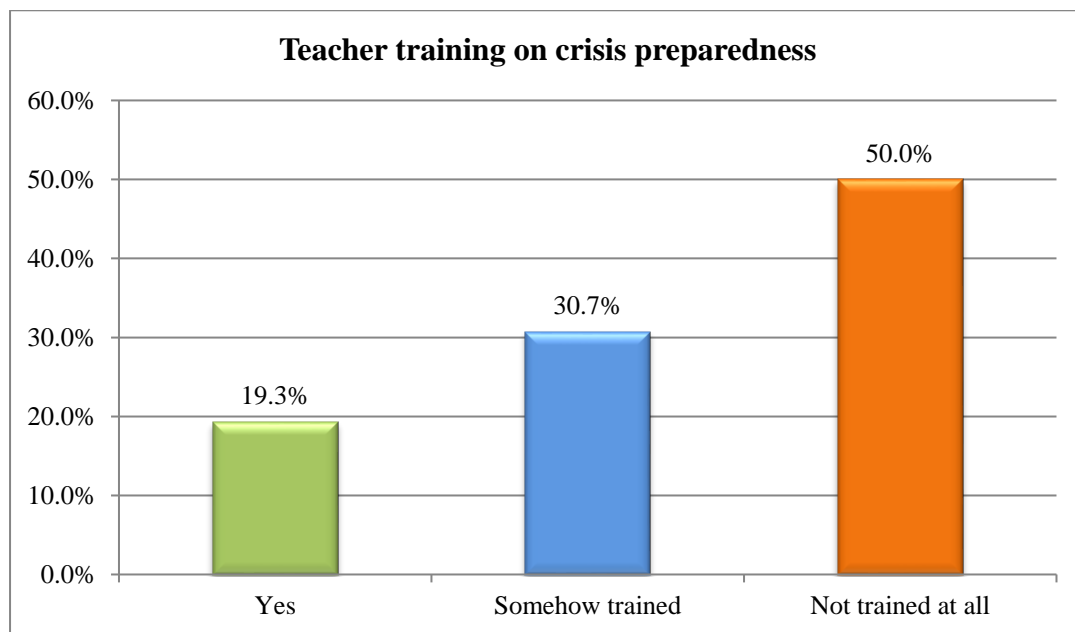
Figure 4.6 Teacher Training on Crisis Preparedness

Result in Figure 4.6 show that half 83 (50.0%) of teachers have never received training on crisis preparedness, 51 (30.7%) had somehow been trained and only 32 (19.3%) agreed to have been adequately trained on crisis preparedness in their schools. The low level of teacher training on crisis preparedness could affect the way they manage crises when they happen in their schools. This information was corroborated by principals interview where 7 of them said that they have no training on crisis preparedness, 8 had moderate training while 5 said that they had adequate training on crisis preparedness. Almost all (20) of student council leaders said that they have never received training on crisis preparedness with only 5 saying that they have at least received first aid and safety training in their schools. If the number of school principals not having the required training on crisis is high, it means that even

numbers of teachers' and student leaders with such kind of training is low. The reasons that teachers provided for not receiving crisis preparedness training was due to: inadequacy of funds for training in their schools (2.4%), inadequate awareness on the need for crisis preparedness (1.8%) and inadequate time for teachers to attend crisis preparedness training (2.4%).

The teachers were also asked to indicate if there was crisis / emergency / disaster emergency team that existed in their schools. The responses are provided in Figure 4.5.
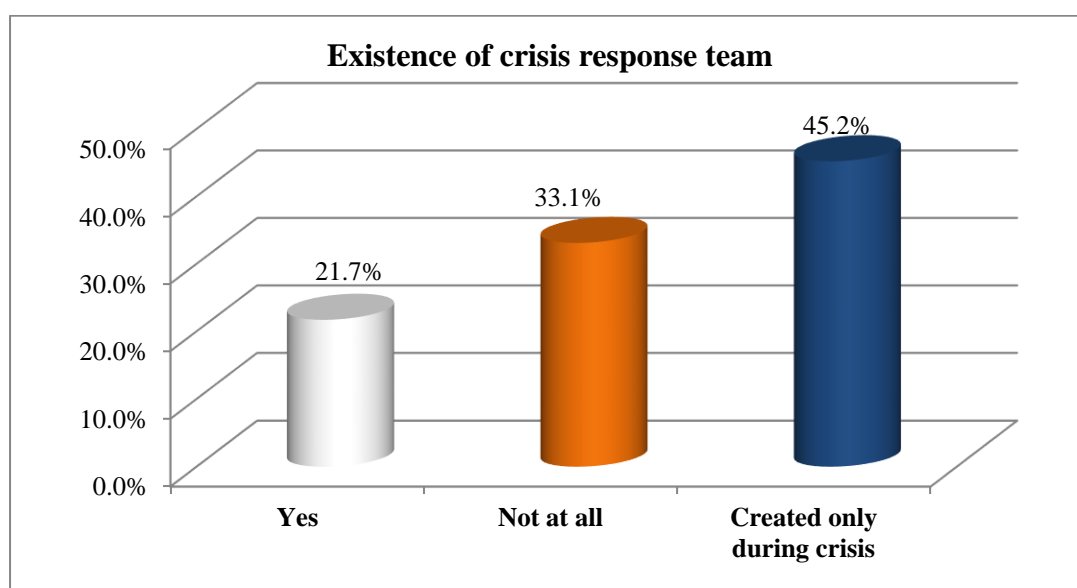
Figure 4.7 Existence of Crises Response Team in Schools

Results in Figure 4.7 show that only 36 (21.7%) of teachers admitted that their schools had disaster crises team in place while close to half 75 (45.2%) reported that this team is created only during crisis. Further, 55 (33.1%) indicated that crises response team has never been created in their schools. during interview, the 11 principals said that they have crisis response team in their schools, 7 said that it is there but activated when crisis occurs and 2 said that they did not have a crisis

response team in their schools. This is what principal No. 19 said on crisis response team in the school:

> *We do have crisis response team in the school headed by the deputy principal, HODs and school bursar.*

Another principal when probed to indicate why there is no active crisis response team in schools reported the following:

> *We do not have active crisis response team active because of the academic demands that are there in the school. In case a crisis occurs, we just call for emergency meeting where a team is developed to deal and address it.*

This means that even with impending crisis battling schools, some school do not even create a response team to manage and bring it to a closure. Therefore, the impact of crisis happening could be devastating since there exist no coordinated team to address and manage crisis in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. Reasons given for not having the crisis team in place was due to; rarity of crisis occurring (2.4%), inadequacy of funds (1.8%) and lack of emphasis by school management on the need to have that team in place in schools (6.6%).

4.4 Communication Practices and Crisis Preparedness in Secondary Schools

The third objective of the study was to investigate the level of crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County. The teachers were asked to indicate if there was a crisis warning mechanism in place in their schools to notify all stakeholders on time. The results are provided in Figure 4.8.
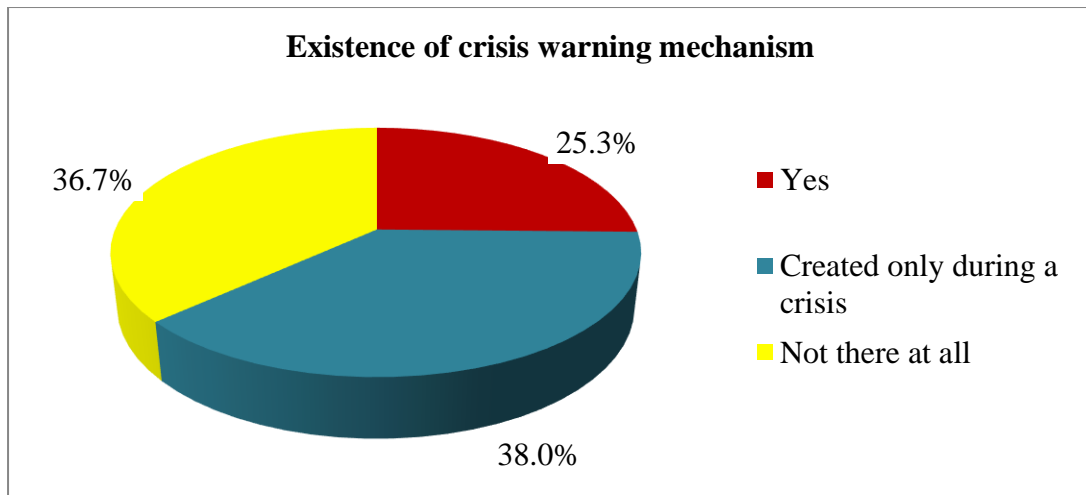
Figure 4.8 Existence of Crisis Warning Mechanism in Place to Notify Stakeholders

Results in Figure 4.8 show that 63 (38.0%) mentioned that it is only created when a crisis occurs and only 42 (25.3%) of teachers said that a crisis warning mechanism is always available in their schools. Surprisingly, 61 (36.7%) admitted that their school did not have a crisis warning mechanism in place to notify all stakeholders in case a crisis occurred. This means that there is low preparation by schools in terms of having an already established crisis communication to notify stakeholders on crisis happening in their institutions. This means that crisis warning mechanisms are critical to averting a disaster escalating to unmanageable levels.

The study further asked the respondents to indicate whether crisis communication preparedness guidelines were available and being used or not in use in their schools. Their responses are given in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Crisis Communication Guidelines Usage in Schools

	Crisis communication guidelines	Available		Unavailable
		In use	Not in use	
1	Telephone number of all teachers and school administration	102 (61.4%)	32 (19.3%)	32 (19.3%)
2	Emails of the school	81 (48.8%)	38 (22.9%)	47 (28.3%)
3	Fire safety guidelines	64 (38.6%)	49 (29.5%)	53 (31.9%)
4	Incident report plan	51 (30.7%)	47 (28.3%)	68 (41.0%)
5	Database of students parents contacts	87 (52.4%)	37 (22.3%)	42 (25.3%)
6	Weather guidelines (floods, winds, thunderstorms, lighting)	18 (10.8%)	59 (35.5%)	89 (53.6%)
	Average	67 (40.4%)	44 (26.5%)	55 (33.1%)

Results in Table 4.8 show that the telephone numbers of all teachers and school administration are available and in use in 61.4% of schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, 19.3% said the contacts are available but not in use whereas 19.3% indicated that all teachers, non-teaching staff and school management members phone numbers are not available. The result show that a number of schools have not made effort to ensure that all school staff (teaching and non-teaching) contacts are available so that in case of a crisis happening in schools, they can be contacted, traced or even informed.

With the transformation in technology, 81 (48.8%) of schools reported that they have school email that is functioning, 38 (22.9%) reported that it is there but not in use whereas 47 (28.3%) indicated that they do not have a school email. This shows that half of schools in the Sub-County have not yet activated their email for communication purposes in schools and also informing stakeholders or receiving feedback from them even in times of crisis. The lack of emails could be due to

unavailability of supportive infrastructure in some schools (internet connection and computers) due to remoteness and also network coverage.

Results also show that only 64 (38.6%) of teachers reported that their school fire safety guidelines are in use while 49 (29.5%) indicated that despite the guidelines being in place, they are not in use. Further, 53 (31.9%) of teachers said that fire safety guidelines are not available in their schools. The result show that in case of fire disaster occurring, more than 60.0% of schools are prepared to handle since students, teachers and other workers do not understand what to do and who to communicate with during that period which could lead to increased destruction and in some cases loss of lives.

At least 87 (52.4%) of teachers indicated that their schools have parents contacts database and they regularly use them to communicate with them but 37 (22.3%) pointed out that despite their schools having contacts of all parents, these contacts have never been used. further, 42 (25.3%) of teachers indicated that their schools do not have parents contacts. For those without parents contacts, there is no way the parents would receive information with regard to crisis happening in their schools hence putting them in a situation of panic on what their children are going through.

Even for the schools that have not activated parents' contacts, if a disaster happens, it would be impossible to retrieve and effectively communicate with parents of students to inform them or even allow parents to make queries in schools. Lastly, only 18 (10.8%) of teachers said that weather guidelines in their schools are in use while 59 (35.5%) said that despite these guidelines being available, they are not used at all.

More than half 89 (53.6%) of teachers reported that they do not have weather guidelines. The lack of weather guidelines to inform all stakeholders on what to do in case of floods, winds, thunderstorms, mudslide or even lighting would result to disaster having a significant impact once it struck the schools. For instance, students need to know the emergency procedure to undertake in case lighting and thunderstorm, flash floods and even wind blow up their school infrastructure.

The application of crisis communication guidelines was found to be active in only 67 (40.4%) of schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. Further, 44 (26.5%) of schools had these guidelines but they were not in use while 55 (33.1%) of schools did not have crisis communication guidelines. The result henceforth shows that only 40% of schools in the Sub-County have crisis communication guidelines that are known and understood by all stakeholders to follow or act in case a crisis happens. The remaining 60.0% of schools could suffer consequences of not having these crisis communication guidelines in schools that may result to injuries, wanton destruction of school property, and theft of school property and also lives may be lost in some cases.

One of the principal's (No. 10) interviewed said the following with regard to communication during crisis:

> *When a crisis happens, at the beginning, the first responders collect information and communicate any important information with the intention of properly and adequately evaluate the crisis.*

This means that schools have laid up the procedures of communicating in case a crisis happens in their schools. According to another principal (No. 20), they preferred one on one communication with stakeholders when a crisis occurred:

We prefer face to face communication where possible but do understand that

there will be occasions where information is shared by other communication

medium depending severity of the crisis.

Further, the teachers were asked to indicate the communication activities that were used in their schools to address or even manage crisis. They were required to provide their answers in a Likert scale of five which ranged from poor (1) to extremely high (5). The results are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Communication Practices used in Management of Crisis in Schools

| | Communication practices in managing crisis | Level of Preparedness | | | | | M | S.Dev |
		Poor	Below average	Moderate	High	Very High		
1	Use of counselling services	8 (4.8%)	12 (7.2%)	51 (30.7%)	48 (28.9%)	47 (28.3%)	3.6867	1.1056
2	Informing stakeholders through local TV	37 (22.3%)	37 (22.3%)	50 (30.1%)	16 (9.6%)	26 (15.7%)	2.7410	1.3345
3	Informing stakeholders through radio	17 (10.2%)	22 (13.3%)	53 (31.9%)	47 (28.3%)	27 (16.3%)	3.2711	1.1878
4	Calling parents	10 (6.0%)	9 (5.4%)	61 (36.7%)	52 (31.3%)	34 (20.5%)	3.5482	1.0649
5	Use of emails	26 (15.7%)	33 (19.9%)	63 (38.0%)	30 (18.1%)	14 (8.4%)	2.8373	1.1510
6	Contacting local administration (chief, nyumba kumi & police)	28 (16.9%)	15 (9.0%)	55 (33.1%)	40 (24.1%)	28 (16.9%)	3.1506	1.2915
7	Use of Facebook platform	41 (24.7%)	23 (13.9%)	47 (28.3%)	25 (15.1%)	30 (18.1%)	2.8795	1.4133
8	Use of Twitter handles/ hashtags for information dissemination	49 (29.5%)	38 (22.9%)	38 (22.9%)	17 (10.2%)	24 (14.5%)	2.5723	1.3852
9	Press statements/press releases	60 (36.1	40 (24.1%)	37 (22.3%)	7 (4.2%)	22 (13.3%)	2.3434	1.3560
	Average						**3.0033**	**1.2544**

Result in Table 4.9 show that 57.2% of teachers agreed that they use counselling

services as crisis communication practices in their schools on regular occasions while

only 4.8% did not use this method at all. A significant number 51 (30.7%) said that the usage of counselling services as a crisis preparedness and management approach was at moderate level in their school. This means that counselling is an integral part of crisis preparedness and management in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

It is seen also that 74 (44.6%) of teachers said that their schools do not inform stakeholders on crisis in their schools through the local TV stations, 50 (30.1%) said they sometimes inform them via TV and only 42 (25.3%) said they regularly inform their stakeholders via the TV. The low use of TV as a channel of communicating information pertaining to school crisis could be due to the costs associated with the services which are not possible for a majority of secondary schools.

Result also show that only 74 (44.6%) said their schools uses radio stations to inform stakeholders about crisis situations in their schools, 53 (31.9%) said their schools sometimes use this medium and 39 (23.5%) reported that radio usage to inform stakeholders concerning crisis in their school was low. The above findings implies that many schools in Kapenguria Sub-County do sometimes inform their stakeholders through radio of crisis situation in their schools and this can be confirmed by descriptive data ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.18$). The higher standard deviation values imply that some schools do use while others do not bearing in mind the issue of cost, availability of radio stations and also efficiency of them in reaching all stakeholders within the shortage time possible.

When asked on the frequency to which parents are always called in case a crisis happens in their schools, at least 86 (51.8%) mentioned that it is done regularly in their schools, 61 (31.3%) mentioned that calling parents is done moderately and only

19 (11.4%) reported that calling of parents is low. This means that in case of crisis in their schools, the schools management calls the parents of children to inform them on what is going on and what they are doing to manage and address the crisis.

On the usage of email to communicate crisis information, 63 (38.0%) said that this is done on moderate level, 44 (26.5%) reported the usage of email to be high and 59 (35.6%) said that email was lowly used. From the result it is therefore clear that email is not regularly used (M=2.83, SD=1.15) as a communication channel to convey information to various stakeholders on crisis in public secondary schools in the area.

Findings also show that 68 (41.0%) of teachers said that their schools normally contact local administration (chiefs, nyumba kumi leaders and police) to inform them of the impending crisis in schools whereas 43 (25.9%) rarely call the administrators. This means that some schools often inform the local administrators of impending crisis in their schools while others rarely call them. Considering the local administration have the capacity to mobilise adequate personnel and resources to address the crisis, a quarter of the school in the Sub-County appear not to be relying on these government officials which could be risky in case of serious crisis like fires, strikes and even flooding. This means community and administrator support is key towards effective crisis communication plan because it facilitates and fosters a good relationship.

Findings reveal that only 33.2% of schools use Facebook platform to communicate information concerning crisis in their schools, 47 (28.3%) sometimes use the platform whereas 64 (38.6%) lowly used the platform. The result shows that schools have embraced social media as channel of communication to all their stakeholders and also informing them on the crisis situations in their schools once they happen. For

secondary schools that were using the Facebook platform lowly, this could be due to lack of resources to support social media use or even the network inaccessibility challenges.

On the use of Twitter platform hash tags for crisis information dissemination, majority 87 (52.4%) never or lowly used the platform, 38 (22.9%) sometimes used the platform while only 41 (24.7%) regularly use the platform. This means that twitter as a communication platform has not been well embraced as a crisis communication platform in public secondary schools in the Sub-County. This could be due to poor network coverage, lack of capacity to utilise twitter, schools policies with regard to usage of this platform and even costs associated with having infrastructure to facilitate twitter usage.

On press statements release, 100 (60.2%) of schools do not use this platform, 37 (22.3%) moderately sent press releases while only 29 (17.5%) used this medium to communicate or pass crisis information. This means that press releases are not favourable medium to pass crisis information because of the issue of inaccessibility to reporters and media houses within the near school vicinity. In summary, study results shows that communication practices are moderately applied (*M*=3.00, *SD*=1.25) in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. This means that some schools are use a variety of communication platforms for crisis communication disseminations while others are not using at all.

4.5 Effect of Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Schools

The respondents were asked to give their opinion on whether communication played a pivotal role in crisis preparedness in schools. The responses are provided in Figure 4.8.
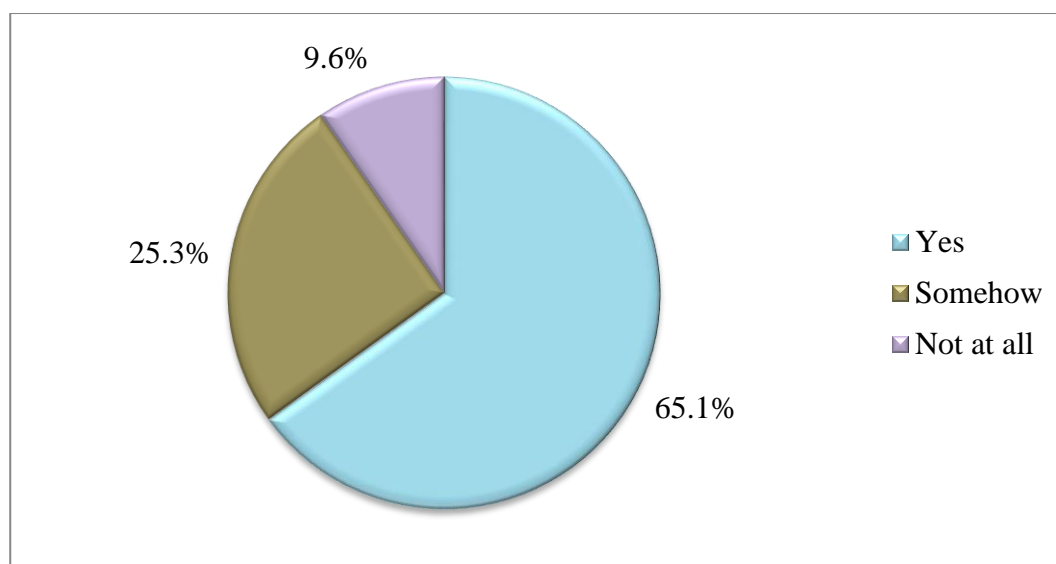
Figure 4.9 Whether communication plays significant role in crisis preparedness

Results in Figure 4.9 show that 108 (65.1%) of teachers agreed that communication performance a significant role in managing crisis in their schools in case they happen. A quarter 42 (25.3%) said that it sometimes play a pivotal role while 16 (9.6%) believed that communication does not play a pivotal role in management of crisis in their schools. this means that majority teachers (over 90.0%) believe that communication is essential for crisis preparedness and management in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

Reasons given for this pivotal role was because: it helps to pass information to stakeholders who are able to respond immediately (41.0%) and it helps to address rumours and misunderstandings that come out when crisis happens (4.8%). Other teachers reported that communication is vital in addressing crisis since it ensures that schools have a proper plan with regard to combating a crisis. Other teachers indicated that crisis preparedness is dependent on communication framework in place. The teachers also said that by having communication, it helps to create awareness on crisis, solutions to address the crisis and precautions stakeholders need to undertake to

avoid damages and negative effects of crisis. In relation to students, discipline level has improved because of regular communication between teachers and parents to address students' cases in schools.

Moreover, through open-ended questions, the researcher asked the teachers to indicate how communication impacted on crisis during pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis stages. The results are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 How Communication impacts on pre-crisis, crisis response and post – crisis stages

Impact	Frequency	Percent
Prevent / stop a crisis from escalating/happening	94	56.6
Create awareness	7	4.2
It impact a lot	5	3.0
Helps on preparedness for imminent disaster	17	10.2
Makes crisis resolution process easy	11	6.6
Makes all aware and find out the possible measures to curb the situation in case it arises	20	12.0
Failure to explain or help in averting a crisis	6	3.6
Moderate	6	3.6
Total	166	100.0

Result in Table 4.11 show that most 94 (56.6%) of teachers said that through communication preparedness, crisis are prevented and stopped from escalating in schools. Further result show that a significant 17 (10.2%) of teachers felt that with crisis communication preparedness in place, resolutions for crisis are always crisis while 20 (12.0%) mentioned that through proper communication, everyone is aware and possible measures are sought to address the situation when they arises. This means that from teachers' point of view, communication is an integral part of pre-

crisis, crisis response and post crisis stages in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

Despite the positive benefits of communication towards crisis preparedness in schools. The teachers were asked to highlight some of the challenges that affected crisis communication process in schools. The results are presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Challenges experienced in crisis communication in schools

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Poor channels used	73	44.0
Lack of sufficient channels of communication	23	13.9
Poor network coverage	15	9.0
Delays in passing information	14	8.4
Poor timing of communication	12	7.2
Lack of embracing new methods of communication technology	9	5.4
Sometimes crisis presented might be downplayed by those in authority	8	4.8
When communication is directed from the top	6	3.6
Distorted messages	6	3.6
Total	166	100.0

Result from Table 4.12 indicate that the main hindrance towards effective communication preparedness as reported by 73 (44.0%) of teachers was poor communication channels that their schools have adopted to communicate crisis information. This means that the channels that schools have chosen for communication are not effective in disseminating information on crisis in their schools. This is evidenced by 23 (13.9%) of teachers reported that their schools do not have adequate channels for communication and this makes crisis preparedness not effective.

Poor network coverage was also cited as a challenge experienced in crisis communication preparedness in schools. This is because in most areas of Kapenguria

Sub-County (interior), poor network coverage is a problem that affects schools and residents at large. Delays by those responsible for dissemination of crisis information were also mentioned as a challenge towards crisis preparedness in schools. The problem of poor timing of communication and distorted messages were other challenges that were experienced in schools. Further, it was found out that school board of management reluctant to embrace new communication medium appears to slow down the way schools are prepared to handle and manage crisis in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya.

From the above mentioned challenges, the teachers were asked to give their suggestions on what needs to be done to improve crisis communication preparedness in schools. Their responses are provided in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Improving Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Schools

Measures	Frequency	Percent
Raise awareness on crisis communication preparedness in schools	58	34.9
Government to finance schools to acquire current communication in schools	30	18.1
Guidance and counseling	18	10.8
Embracing latest technological communication devices and applications like website for communication	18	10.8
Developing crisis communication preparedness plan	13	7.8
Government to work with telecoms to ensure network masts/boosters are set up	9	5.4
Enhance training of the school community	8	4.8
To have vertical/horizontal/diagonal communication	5	3.0
To be introduced as a subject unit in school	3	1.8
Positioning of alarms at different areas of the school	3	1.8
Government to assist schools in putting in place immediate communication and emergency response team	1	0.6
Total	166	100.0

Table 4.13 shows various recommendations were put forward by teachers as a measure of addressing crisis communication preparedness in schools. Further, 58 (34.9%) of teachers said is that there is need for the school management to raise awareness to all stakeholders concerning crisis communication in schools. Findings also showed that 18.1% said that government needs to provide finances to schools to enable them purchase modern communication appliances to improve the way schools communicate before, during and after crisis. Guidance and counseling was mentioned by 10.8% as another method of improving crisis preparedness in schools. The boards of management are also recommended to ensure that their schools adopt latest technological communication equipments and platforms to improve crisis communication efficiency. Further, 7.8% said that schools needs to develop a crisis communication preparedness plans to guide all before, during and after crisis in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya. Further, training on communication was also recommended from the study findings.

4.6 Discussions of Findings

This section discusses the study results in relation to past studies that have been done in the field to find if there are similarities or discrepancies. The discussions follow the research objectives.

4.6.1 Communication Practices Available in Public Secondary Schools

Effective communication is important in all aspects of responding to crisis in schools. Because of many stakeholders who are in the school, communication is key to ensure information is disseminated and feedback given acted on in real time. Research results showed that 57.8% of schools communication model came from top to bottom with only 22.3% reporting that their schools had diagonal and horizontal communication

approach. This agrees with Mensah (2018) who found out that most institutional communication format was from the top to the bottom. This means that members at the lower structure of the school organisation rarely receive information from the school principal.

Further, it was found out that the individual responsible for disseminating communication from schools on regular occasion was principal. This means that if a crisis happened and the principal was out of the school, schools had to wait for the principal to come to sanction release of information to stakeholders. This could have significant impact on crisis management since there would be delay in responding to crisis plea from various individuals and stakeholders.

The communication medium preferred by majority of schools and which were used on daily occasions was through face to face interactions (83.1%), use of school notice board (74.1%), mobile phone communication (62.0%), use of social media accounts (54.8%) and SMS (52.4%). The schools rarely used landline phones, school newspapers, fire alarms, school website or even email to communicate in the schools. The study is different from Birya (2020) who established that email was the most used channel of communication at Daystar University followed by assembly forum in the school chapel and phone calls in that order respectively. Even in Canada, Mensah (2018) found out that email was the main channel used for communication in academic institutions. The difference from Birya (2020) and Mensah (2018) studies is that they were in a university set up while this study is in a secondary school set up where appropriate facilitative infrastructure for email use may not be available. The researcher observed that despite some communication appliances being available for

use in schools, some were not used for communication despite of their benefits towards ensuring effective communication in schools.

4.6.2 Crisis faced by Public Secondary Schools

Findings showed that the level of crisis in secondary schools was low (M=2.1, SD=1.13). The findings coincide with Daughtry (2015) who found out that most principals (71.42%) said they had experienced a crisis event which broadly impacted on the school environment. The major crisis that secondary schools faced was drugs and substance abuse by students. This problem was mentioned by principals and students leaders that it is the challenge that almost all secondary schools in the Sub-County are facing. The second crisis that occurred frequently in secondary schools was theft incidents in schools committed by students, support staff and even outsiders. Considering not all schools have proper fencing and security systems in place, incidents of thefts were common occurrences in majority of public schools resulting to loss of students' personal items, school equipments and even print materials. Bullying incident was also mentioned to be common across schools propagated by the Form 3 and Form 4 to Form 2 and Form 1 students. Crisis associated with sexual abuse rarely occurred in schools (they happened in less than 5 schools). Landslide and flooding incidents were found not to have been experienced by secondary schools in the study area. This is in contrast to Onyango (2013) who discovered that crisis associated with natural disasters were common like thunder, lighting, strong winds, storms and floods.

Despite both principals, teachers and students reporting few incidents of crisis in their schools, this study found out that the level of preparedness was at an average level (M=2.97, SD=1.25). The study finding coincides with Birya (2020) who discovered

that the management of the crisis was not effective in the view of its stakeholders. Also, a research by Mururi (2014) found that 62.5% of schools crisis preparedness level as poor. This put majority of schools in vulnerable situation of loss in case a crisis occurs. The same can be reported to be of West Pokot where the study found out that school had the capacity of addressing theft incidents but lacked adequate capacity to address drugs and substance abuse in their schools. The finding agrees with Onyango (2013) that most schools were not adequately prepared to deal with crisis once they happen in their schools. This is in contrast to Hill (2015) who found out that US schools were adequately prepared to handle all major crises that could occur and happen in their schools. This means that developed nations have prioritised crisis preparedness issues seriously.

4.6.3 Effect of Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Schools

The study found out that only 25.3% of schools had a crisis warning mechanism in place to notify all stakeholders within and outside the school of crisis. For example, very few schools were found to have alarm systems and in case of fire or other incidents, it would be impossible to quickly alert students, teachers and other workers of the impending danger. It would take some time for everyone to be informed on what is happening in the school. In agreement with the study results, Onyango (2013) found out that most schools did not have disaster response team in place. The findings are different from Daughtry (2015) who found out that all of the principals indicated that they had a current school-based crisis intervention team.

The communication crisis preparedness guideline that was available in most schools was telephone number (61.4%) of teachers, non-teaching staff and school board of management in addition to contacts of parents (52.4%) who had their children in

schools. This means that over 60.0% of schools had no communication crisis preparedness guidelines in schools. The findings agrees with Onyango (2013) who found out that most (70.0%) of schools did not have safety standards communication manual to be followed or used in case of crisis happening. The findings of the study differs from Daughtry (2015) who established that all of the respondents had a protocol plan for ensuring the physical safety of students in schools. Further, even for those that had crisis communication guidelines in place, 26.5% of these guidelines were not active and just existed and never utilised in schools. This pointed to the laxity by school management towards ensuring that crisis preparedness guidelines are active and prepared to respond to any crisis happening in schools.

Research results showed that use of guidance and counseling was the highest crisis communication preparedness practice (*M*=3.68, *SD*=1.10) available in secondary schools in the study area. The study agrees with Daughtry (2015) who found out in terms of psychological treatment, schools provided psychological first aid or brief counseling services following crisis even. Further, the study found out that in case of crisis, 70.8% of schools would be in a passion to call children parents to inform them what was happening in schools. The results agrees with Hill (2015) where schools were found to inform parents of crisis drills and explain the reasoning for practicing crisis drills to be prepared in the event of disaster. In addition, Daughtry (2015) found out that 75.0% of respondents parents were contacted regularly in case of crisis.

The study found out that the usage of new communication media for crisis preparedness was moderately and lowly used in public secondary schools. For example, the use of Facebook, emails, twitter and even running classified information in TV and radio to inform stakeholders of crisis in schools did not feature in many

schools due to the issue of cost, network and accessibility to the services. The study differs with Mbui (2016) who discovered that that press statements are very important in passing on information and reacting to crisis situations. This meant that communication had a moderate effect (M=3.0, SD=1.25) on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. Nevertheless, 65.1% of teachers were sure that communication played a pivotal role in crisis preparedness in secondary schools once they happened. This means that communication had a positive impact on crisis preparedness, response and management in public secondary schools because it prevents crisis from happening and escalating, makes every stakeholder aware and also helps schools to prepare for imminent disaster from happening. This concurs with Mbui (2016) who discovered that when there is a crisis communication plan, people cannot wait until things get out of hand then begin to run around looking for solutions, at that time it will not be possible to address anyone.

4.6.4 Improving Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Schools

Various suggestions were provided by respondents to address crisis communication preparedness in schools. First, the respondents suggested that crisis communication needs to be given much focus by ensuring that each stakeholder within and outside the school is informed. Secondly, there was also need for schools to ensure that teachers as first responders are properly and regularly trained on communication skills in matters relating to pre-crisis, crisis responses and post-crisis stages. There was also call for the need for the government to ensure that schools are provided with adequate funds to enable them acquires appropriate facilities to enable effective crisis preparedness and management in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings on communication practices and crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya. The major conclusions of the study are also provided in addition to recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study was conducted in selected Kapenguria Sub-County public secondary schools in light of increased incidents of indiscipline, strikes and destruction of school properties in recent times. The participants for the study involved secondary school principals, teachers and student leaders' drawn from several secondary schools in the Sub-County.

5.2.1 Crises Faced by Public Secondary Schools

The study established that various crises faced by secondary schools in the study area include; theft, students violence, bullying, exams cheating, students strikes, drugs and substance abuse, arson and fire. The study found out that the preparedness level by schools to avert and control the crises from escalating was on average. For instance, half of the teachers said that they had never received training on crisis preparedness and only 21.7% of schools were found to have crisis response team in place.

5.2.2 Communication Practices Available in Public Secondary Schools

With respect to communication practices, the study found out that the dominant system used was top to down approach. The communication medium that was found

to be in use was mobile phone, short messaging system (SMS), notices (in the notice board), social media handles and face to face interactions.

5.2.3 Effect of Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Public Secondary Schools

The study established that only 25.3% of schools had a crisis warning mechanism in place while the rest did not have. This means that many schools had not considered having a crisis communication warning mechanism in place as required by SCCT theory in order to manage crisis in their schools. This implied that most schools only reacted to crisis whenever it occurred. Nevertheless, the respondents agreed that communication practices (if present) would influence crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County, Kenya.

5.2.4 Improving Communication Practices on Crisis Preparedness in Public Secondary Schools

Various challenges were discovered on communication practices towards crisis preparedness like prevalent of poor channels of communication, poor network coverage of schools, delays in passage of information, poor timing of communication, downplay of crisis by those in administration and distortion of messages. To address the communication practices on crisis preparedness, it was recommended that there is need for raising awareness on crisis communication preparedness in schools and schools needs to embrace latest technological mediums for communication functions. On the side of the government, they need to provide additional funds to schools to enable them install latest communication infrastructure for crisis preparedness in schools.

5.3 Conclusions

The study investigated influence of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County. Communication practices in schools are still top-bottom and therefore information is disseminated from principal down to the student with little coming from the student going upward. Majority of schools were found to stick to conventional communication methods with few schools found to have adopted modern communication media.

The study found out that different crisis existed in public secondary schools and schools have to be prepared to prevent, handle and also manage them in case they happen. The crisis commonly faced by schools ranged from drugs and substance abuse by students, incidents of thefts, bullying and also windstorms which removes roofing sections of classrooms and other school facilities. However, the level of preparedness by schools to handle these crises was found to be low as teachers even lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to address or counter them once they happen. In line with SCCT theory, failure to manage crises may result to significant damages in the school and this is mainly caused by students who consider themselves as victims. Hence, crises provide the need for communication with stakeholders concerning crisis as it would enhance their awareness on what to in case a crisis occurs to enable school management be in the control of the situation.

The study discovered that schools did not have any crisis warning mechanism in place in addition to inadequate use of crisis communication guidelines in schools. The only area that schools appeared to be prepared was in having the contacts of all school staff and students parents. Guidelines associated with incident report plan, weather

guidelines and fire safety guidelines were found not to be existing in majority of public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

The communication practice that was common in public secondary schools in crisis preparedness was guidance and counseling department. Teachers reported that it was one of the communication practice used to prevent, address and manage various crises that could happen in schools. Nevertheless, majority of respondents indicated that there was positive influence of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub-County.

5.4 Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations for policy, action and also theoretical considerations by various stakeholders with regard to communication role in crisis preparedness in public secondary schools in Kapenguria Sub County.

(i)   To address crises faced in secondary schools, the study recommends that annual review of school safety should be conducted across all public secondary schools by Ministry of Education together with the BOM to ascertain their preparedness level and recommendations on areas of strengthening to avert potential disaster happening in schools.

(ii)   As a way of improving communication practices in schools, there is need for secondary school board of management to ensure adoption of diagonal and horizontal communication approaches in addition to strengthening feedback mechanism (from bottom – top). The government also needs to provide adequate funds for schools to upgrade their communication infrastructure.

(iii)   On communication crisis preparedness, the study suggests that teachers and other stakeholders need to be continuously trained on crisis communication as

this will improve their knowledge and skills towards handling and managing crisis. Further, the government needs to empower school management with requisite training on crisis preparedness through providing assistance on preparing fire safety guidelines, weather guidelines and incident report plans.

(iv)   To address the impact of communication practices on crisis preparedness, the study suggests that secondary schools management should set up crisis/emergency response team with clear roles in schools. There is also need for schools to adopt cloud based solutions in storage of contacts of all stakeholders in schools which will enable easy retrieval in case physical contacts details cannot be traced.

5.5 Suggestions for further Research

The study makes the following recommendations for future studies:

(i)   A similar research can be conducted in other sub counties to check for similarities and challenges

(ii)   Communication competencies of school teachers and principals towards crisis preparedness in public secondary schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

I am a student of Moi University carrying out a study on "Influence of communication practices on crisis preparedness in public secondary school in Kapenguria Sub-County, Kenya". Kindly respond to the following statements by checking in the appropriate brackets and filling the blank spaces.

Instructions
Please tick (√) in the appropriate bracket or answer as required.

Section 1: General Information
1. Please indicate your age in years?
    (a)21-30 yrs ( )   (b)31-40 yrs ( ) (c)41-50 yrs ( ) (d) 51 yrs & above ( )
2. Your gender?
    (a) Male ( )   (b) Female ( )
3. What is your highest level of education?
    (a) Diploma ( )   (b) Undergraduate Degree ( )
    (c) Postgraduate diploma ( ) (c) Masters ( )
4. How long have you been teaching in secondary schools?
    (a) Less than 5yrs ( )   (b) 6 – 10yrs ( )
    (c) 11 – 15 years ( )   (d) 16yrs & above ( )
5. What is the category of your school based on the following?
 (a) Students admitted: (a) Boys ( ) (b) Mixed Day/Boarding ( ) (c) Girls ( )
               (d) Mixed Day ( )   (e) Mixed Boarding ( )
 (b) School category: (a) National ( )   (b) Extra County ( )
                   (c) County ( )   (d) Sub-County ( )

Section B: Crisis Prevalent in Secondary Schools
6. (a) As a teacher, indicate the extent at which you experience the following crisis happening in your school in the last three years. Provide your answer on the table below

		Frequency of occurrence				
	Crisis type	**Always**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
1	Flooding					
2	Landslide					
3	Bullying (students)					
4	Arson (by students)					
5	Drug & substance abuse					
6	Lighting					
7	Heavy wind					
8	Sexual abuse (rape, defilement)					
9	Cattle rustling					
10	Fire (electricity)					
12	Students fight/violence					
13	Theft incidents (staff and students)					

| 14 | Student rampage (strike) | | | | | |
| 15 | Exams cheating | | | | | |

(b) Which other crises have you been experiencing in your school in recent times (apart from the ones mentioned in the above table?) ....
....
....

Section C: Level of Preparedness in Handling the Crisis

7. (a) From the time you have been in this school, indicate how prepared your school is towards managing and addressing the crisis mentioned in the table not to increase or bring damage. Indicate your responses on the table below:

| | Crisis type | Level of preparedness | | | | |
		Extremely high	High	Moderate	Below average	Poor
1	Flooding					
2	Landslide					
3	Bullying (students)					
4	Arson (by students)					
5	Drug & substance abuse					
6	Lighting					
7	Heavy wind					
8	Sexual abuse (rape, defilement)					
9	Cattle rustling					
10	Fire (electricity)					
12	Students fight/violence					
13	Theft incidents (staff and students)					
14	Student rampage (strike)					
15	Exams cheating					

(b) According to the above responses you provided on the table above, kindly comment why do you think some crisis mentioned above level of preparation is low? Give reasons
....
....
8. (a) Do you think the school management (principals and BOM) have made appropriate efforts to prepare and plan for the crisis?

       Yes [   ]   Somehow [   ]   Not at all [   ]

(b) Kindly support your answer ....

9. Have you received proper training on crisis preparedness and management in your school?

       Yes [   ]   Somehow [   ]   Not at all [   ]

(b) Kindly support your answer ....

10. Is there a crisis/disaster/emergency response team already created in your school?

       Yes [   ]   Not at all [   ]   Created only during a crisis [   ]

(b) Support your answer ....

Section D: Communication Platforms Used in Secondary Schools

11. How does communication happen in your school?

From top – bottom [   ]   from bottom – top [   ]   vertical [   ]

12. Who is in charge of dispensing communication from the school on regular occasions to different stakeholders when a crisis happens? Tick one(s) that apply

Principal [   ]   Deputy Principal [   ]   Heads of Department [   ]

Teachers [   ]   Student council [   ]   BOM Members [   ]

Other ....

13. (a) The following table seeks to know whether the following communication channels are available for use in your school. Indicate the ones that they are available for use in your school

	Communication media	Available		Unavailable
		In use	Not in use	
1	Landline phone			
2	Mobile phone			
3	Internet medium – email			
4	Short messaging service system			
5	Fire alarm			
6	Notice board			
7	School newspaper			
8	School website			
9	Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instangram			
10	Public address system			
11	Face to face interactions			

(b) Which other communication channels is available in your school for use?

....

....

Section E: Crisis Communication Preparedness in Secondary Schools

14. (a) Is there a crisis warning mechanism in place in your school to notify all stakeholders?

Yes [   ]   Not at all [   ]   Created only during a crisis [   ]

(b) Support your answer ....

15. Kindly indicate whether the following guidelines on crisis communication preparedness are available in your school and whether they are in use

	Crisis communication guidelines	Available		Unavailable
		In use	Not in use	
1	Telephone number of all teachers and school administration			
2	Emails of the school			
3	Fire safety guidelines			
4	Incident report plan			
5	Database of students parents contacts			
6	Weather guidelines (floods, winds, thunderstorms, lighting)			

16. Indicate the communication practices are applied in addressing or managing crisis when they happened in your institution in recent times

	Crisis communication application	Level of preparedness				
		Extremely high	High	Moderate	Below average	Poor
1	Use of counselling services					
2	Informing stakeholders through TV					
3	Informing stakeholders through radio					
4	Calling parents					
5	Use of emails					
6	Contacting the persons through					
7	Social Media presence e.g Facebook					
8	Use of Twitter handles/ hashtags for information dissemination					
9	Press statements/press releases					

17. (a) Do you think communication plays a pivotal role in managing crisis in your school when they happen?

      Yes [   ]   Somehow [   ]   Not at all [   ]

(b) Kindly support your answer..

....

....

18. How does communication impact on crisis communication during the pre-crisis, crisis response and post-crisis stages?

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

19. What are the challenges experienced in crisis communication process in your school?

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

20. What do you think needs to be done to improve crisis communication preparedness in schools?

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

The end
Thank you

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEWER'S SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How long have you been a principal of secondary school?

2. What are the common crisis that you have experienced or likely to happen in your school? Could you please describe their intensity?

3. How is your school prepared to address such crisis that has happened in your school?

4. Who coordinates crisis preparedness level in your school? Is there an activities crisis management team available? Do you have crisis management plan for your school?

5. Do you have adequate training on crisis management in school?

6. How are stakeholders informed on crisis situation in school?

7. What are the communication media used to inform stakeholders on crisis situations in schools?

8. What is the level at which you ensure that proper message is disseminated to different stakeholders during crisis in school?

9. What is the influence of crisis communication preparedness and management in your school?

10. What are the challenges experienced in crisis communication preparedness in your school?

11. What do you think needs to be done to improve the situation above?

APPENDIX III: STUDENT LEADERS INTERVIEW

1.   What are the common crisis that you have experienced or likely to happen in your school? Could you please describe their intensity since you came in Form 1?

2.   How is your school prepared (especially students) to react in case a crisis (es) happens in your school?

3.   Who coordinates crisis preparedness level in your school? Are student leaders involved in crisis preparedness?

4.   As student leaders, have adequate training on crisis preparedness and management in school?

5.   How are other students, teachers and parents informed in case a crisis happens in your school?

6.   What are the communication channels used to communicate crisis situations in your school? Are they actively used?

7.   What is the level at which you ensure that proper message is disseminated to your fellow students and teachers (including administration) in case of crisis incident in your school?

8.   What is the influence of crisis communication preparedness and management in your school according to you? Is it helpful to avert disaster, damage and regrets?

9.   What are the challenges experienced in crisis communication preparedness in your school from the students point of view?

10.   What do you think needs to be done to improve the situation above?

APPENDIX IV: MOI UNIVERSITY LETTER

MOI UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLISHING, JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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Fax No. (053) 43292
Telex NO: 35047 MOIVASITY
E-Mail: hodpublishing.mu.ac.ke OR deanis@mu.ac.ka

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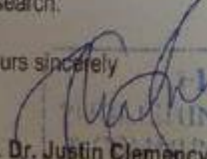Ref. No.: __MU/SIS/PJCS/SA__

30th June, 2020

The Executive Secretary
National Commission for Science Technology & Innovation
(NACOSTI)
P O BOX 30623
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT- CHRISTINE CHEPORIOT LOSEM: SHRD/PGC/07/15

The above named is our Master of Science (MSc) student in Communication Studies programme in the Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies, School of Information Sciences, Moi University.

Ms Christine is intending to carry out research work entitled: *"Strategic Corporate Communication as a Channel for enhancing Organizational Image: A case Study of Kenya Pipeline Company"*...which is a requirement to all postgraduate students Programme.

We are kindly requesting you to issue the student with a Research Permit to enables her proceed with research.

Yours sincerely

Sr. Dr. Justin Clemency Nabushawo
Ag: HEAD: DEPT. PUBLISHING JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)

APPENDIX V: RESEARCH PERMIT

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 335814

Date of Issue: 15/September/2022

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Miss.. CHRISTINE CHEPORIOT LOSEM of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Westpokot on the topic: INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION ON CRISIS PREPAREDNESS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN WEST POKOT SUB COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 15/September/2023.

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APPENDIX VI: ANTI PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE REPORT

SR138

THESIS WRITING COURSE

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In recognition for passing the University's plagiarism

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Awarded by:

Prof. John Changách, CERM-ESA Project Leader

09th /11/2022