



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES**

**An Assessment of Crises Communication Practices and
Challenges: the Case of the Federal Police Commission**

By

Jaylan Abde Gebramedhin

**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Journalism and
Communication in the Partial Fulfillment of Master's Degree in
Public Relations and Strategic Communications**

Advisor: Dr.Yohannes Shiferaw

June 2020

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “An Assessment of Crisis Communication practice and challenge in case of the FPC” is carried out by Jaylan Abde under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Yohannes Shiferaw (Asst. Prof) and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in PR and Strategic Communication. The thesis complies with the regulations of the University and meets the standards with respect to originality and quality, likewise the books, articles and websites, which I have made use of are acknowledged at the respective place in the text.

Advisor _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Coordinator

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Creator for enabling me to do this research paper. Secondly, I would like to offer my special thanks to Dr. Yohannis Shiferaw, the research project advisor, for his valuable and constructive suggestions during the planning and development of this research work, for his professional guidance in designing this research paper, and the valuable technical support and constructive advices he offered.

I would also like to express my very great appreciation to my family, as the decision to learn and fully commit myself to this program would not have come without the full support of my family; especially my wife Ikram Usman and my kids Ramadan Jaylan. You have always been an inspiration in helping me further my academic study.

Again special thanks should be given to his Excellency Commissioner General Endashaw Teso of the FPC for supporting me in material and offering annual leave to do this research paper. I would also like to extend my gratitude to vice Commissioner Fikru Wende for supporting me in material to do this paper. I would like to express my very great appreciation to the FPC, Addis Ababa Police Commission and Oromia Police Commission, private and public Media personals and Kirkos sub-city administration higher officials and experts who committed to give me information through in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2. Objective of the study.....	5
1.2.1. General Objective.....	5
1.2.2. Specific Objectives.....	5
1.3. Research Questions.....	5
1.4. Significance of the Study.....	6
1.5. Scope of the Study.....	6
1.6. Limitations of the Study.....	6
CHAPTER TWO.....	7
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
2. Introduction.....	7
2.1. Definition of Crisis.....	7
2.2. Classification of Crises.....	9
2.3. Meaning of Communication and Crisis Communication:.....	10
2.4. Importance of Communication in Crises Situations.....	13
2.5. Effect of Rumors During Crisis.....	14
2.6. Social Media Rumors.....	15
2.7. Detecting a Rumor and Preventing its Spread.....	16
2.8. Fighting the Rumor.....	17
2.9. Working with Media During Crises.....	18
2.10. Working with Social Media During Crisis.....	21
2.11. Theoretical Framework.....	24

CHAPTER THREE.....	33
RESEARCH METHODS.....	33
3. Introduction.....	33
3.1. Research Design.....	33
3.2. Sample and Sampling Techniques.....	34
3.3. Instruments of Data Collection.....	35
CHAPTER FOUR.....	38
DADA PRSENTETION AND ANALYSIS	38
4. Introduction.....	38
4.1. Crises Communication Strategy.....	39
4.2. Preparation at pre-crisis stage.....	43
4.3. Response at crisis stage.....	45
4.4. Post crisis stage evaluation.....	49
4.5. Stakeholders engagement and consultation.....	50
4.6. Major challenges the Police commission faced in the process of communicating the crises selected for this study.....	53
4.7. Validity and Reliability of the finding.....	56
CHAPTER FIVE.....	58
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	58
5.1. Summary of Major Findings.....	58
5.2. Conclusion.....	60
5.3. Recommendations.....	62
Reference.....	65
Appendix I.....	70
Appendix II.....	71
Appendix III.....	71

List of acronyms

FPC- Federal Police Commission

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

PR–Public Relations

FAC–family assistance center

Abstract

Crisis communication is tool that enables an organization to respond appropriately in order to maintain public confidence and minimize the damage. The main purpose of this particular study is to assess the crisis communication practice and challenge in the case of FPC by taking selected cases into consideration. This research fills a knowledge gap that exists in practical application of crisis communication strategy in FPC to tackle crisis. It also provides the FPC with further information on the importance of designing and applying crisis communication strategy and to resolve existing challenges. The study has employed descriptive design and qualitative approach to conduct the study. Accordingly, in depth interview and FGD were applied as instruments of data collection. Respondents were selected purposively based on their relevant knowledge in relation to the subject matter. The researcher has conducted In-depth interviews with five senior officials of the FPC, five senior officials of Addis Ababa and Oromia Police Commissions, seven journalists from press, electronic media and Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, two Media and Public Relations Officers from Ministry of Defense (MoD), one officer from the Public Relations Department of National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and one officer from the Public Relations Department of Information Network Security Agency (INSA). Totally the researcher has conducted with twenty one in-depth interviews and one FGD with ten participants who are residents of Kirkos Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration as well as experts with different educational backgrounds.

The major findings of study show that the FPC has no crisis communication strategy to apply during critical situations mentioned in the study. As a result tells that the FPC was not able to act in accordance with the three stages of crisis namely pre-crisis, crisis and post crisis strategy that should have been applied to tackle the crises; thus the FPC did not evaluate the history of those crises to find out its strength and weakness. In addition to these the result has indicated that the FPC hadn't properly engage and consult its active stakeholders and furthermore, public opinion was not properly managed by establishing media monitoring and public opinion framework. Based on the findings, therefore, the researcher forwarded some recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

According to Fearn-Banks, (2007) a crisis is a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name. He added that a crisis interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization. Furthermore, he exemplifies crisis as a strike, terrorism, fire; a boycott, product failure, or numerous other events. Doorley and Garcia, (2011) noted that speed is one ingredient of effective communication; robust content and effective distribution of the messages are others.

Doorley and Garcia, (2011) added that one of the goals of crisis communication is to influence the way key stakeholders think and feel, and what those stakeholders know and do. To do so requires controlling the communication agenda, and not allowing the media, adversaries, or the rumor mill to define a company's situation. Further, Ray, (1999) argues that crisis communication enables an organization to respond appropriately in order to maintain public confidence and minimize the damage; managers may assume that all crisis communication has the same objective and all audiences may approach with the same strategy. However, what works in one situation does not necessarily work in another. Therefore, it is impossible to prescribe a standardized communication strategy for crisis managers.

Moreover, Fearn-Banks, (2007) states that crisis communication is the dialog between the organization and its public prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence, the dialog details strategies and tactics are designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization. Ndlela, (2007) also defined crisis communication as an integral part of the crisis management cycle and like crisis management, crisis communication has evolved from a narrow perspective where the objective of crisis communication was to control the damage during a crisis to a much broader understanding. As to Ndlela, crisis communication is an interdisciplinary field, drawing from the disciplines of management, organizational studies, public relations, rhetoric, psychology, communication & media studies and so on.

In this study, the researcher aims to assess the crisis communication practices and challenges that encountered the FPC (Commission), by taking three cases. The first one is the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele, the late Project Manager of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on July 26, 2018. The second incident is the death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera on June 24, 2019 and the third is the case of prominent Oromo politicians, Jawar Mohammed's 'safety call' for his supporters via social media on Oct. 23, 2019.

As to Reporter newspaper, (2019) the ways of management of those crisis cases were highly criticized by media and public at large. Since this type of crisis happens frequently, it may lead to decrease the mutual Police-community trust and it might harm the image, reputation and credibility of the FPC. Moreover, those selected cases are helpful to examine the practice of crisis communication and its challenges. It will give opportunity to examine crisis communication in practice.

The topics of the research were chosen to enhance awareness of the FPC managements on the importance of crisis communication strategy in tackling crisis. Further it helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the FPC in handling crises. This research would help to fill a knowledge gap that has existed in practical application and management of crisis communication strategy in the FPC. Likewise, the researcher believes that those crises serve as an organizational learning opportunity not only for the FPC, but also for other similar organization as a whole.

Barton, (2001) also said that organizational crises have been imposed as a threat to the operations of an organization, that may ruin good relationship of the organization and the public at large; that in return would erode the mutual trust that should exist between the public and the organization. Ray, (1999) said that a crisis does inflict harm on the organization's reputation because of the negative information it generates about the organization. Thus, the research attempts to fill the knowledge gap that exists in practical application of crisis communication strategy in FPC to tackle crisis. It also provides the Commission with further information on the importance of crisis communication strategy.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Police force is often prone to crisis and the nature of the job of law enforcement makes it difficult to avoid such encounters. Mawby, (2002) argues that the image of Police forces is built not only through active media and public relations, but also through the routine undertaking of Police work, involving countless Police-public encounters which create impressions of Police.

As to Mawby, (2002) the issue of public order has become a central part of managing the Police image and in Police institution crisis communication plans should cover scandals or incidents that could damage the Police department's reputation. These may include things such as cases of Police personnel misconduct, controversial use of force, or mishandled investigations. Vos, Lund, Reich and Harro-Loit, (2011) noted that during challenging crises, people need accurate and current information in regular manner to know what is going on in the country. Lindberg, (2008) also argues that the need for information in a crisis is huge, and mass media are nearly always first and have the greatest impact, as a false picture will be difficult to adjust later.

Moreover, Vos, Lund, Reich and Harro-Loit, (2011) added that complex crises occupy the attention of several agents and require fluent information exchange not only among the authorities responsible for crisis management but also citizens directly or indirectly affected with. Likewise, crises attract a lot of media attention and news, owing to the latest developments in mass communications; it circulates more rapidly than ever before.

Thus, there is obvious pressure to communicate efficiently in crises. Otherwise, as explained by Fearn-Banks, (2007), rumors and false information fill the gaps and social media fuels and aggravates chaos. What internet blogs, sites, and social media do is provide faster, easier ways to circulate rumors and thereby cause crises for organizations and individuals. Tench and Yeomans, (2006) contend that in such conditions chaos should be managed by strategy and tactics.

The reason to conduct this study is to identify the practical problems envisaged with crisis communication strategy of the FPC and to describe its competency of handling crises in line with its use of crisis communication strategy. Starting from 2018-2019, the Police Commission has been operating in dangerous and critical situation and there were many instances in which the Commission faced crisis.

There are a number of studies conducted on the topic of organizational crisis communication in Ethiopia and elsewhere. One of the studies is the communication strategies of Ethiopian Airlines group: A case study of flight 302 accident conducted by Dawit Temesgen, (2019). The Second was titled crisis communication as a Strategy to Protect Reputation: The case of Mirinda, which was studied by Fitsum Zerue, (2018). The third crisis communication for law enforcement: crafting a successful strategy using social media, by Coonce, (2019). Thus Dawit Temesgen, (2019) in his research found out that the communication practitioners and manager of the airline do not work in collaboration with the executives of the airline; that corporate communication practitioners do not receive regular trainings on crisis communication and management ; that the airline used of mortification, bolstering and compensation strategies to respond to the crisis and that the post- crisis phase emerged as an opportunity to the airline for organizational learning.

Fitsum Zerue, (2018) also found in his study that Mirinda Company is not yet to follow a scientific way of strategic crisis communication to protect its reputation and to minimize the responsibility for crisis. Coonce, (2019) on the other hand, found that law enforcement did not establish protocols and create strategies with these elements: conduct regular scenario-based crisis communication training, leverage the young social-media savvy generation that grew up with technology, commonly called “digital natives,” for social media communications, actively monitor social media. This as to the researcher is with attention not only to content but also to tone and lexicon, ensure timely communication with the public after use of force incidents, and place priority in messaging on qualities, such as honesty and compassion.

As the researcher observed, at least in the context of Ethiopia, there are no studies that describe the law enforcements’ practices of crisis communication and challenges. Therefore, the researcher is attempting to fill the gap in the actual practices; that is a knowledge gap that exists in practical application of crisis communication strategy in FPC to tackle crisis. It also provides the FPC with further information on the importance of designing and applying crisis communication strategy and to resolve existing challenges. Moreover, the study attempts to identify the strength and weakness of the FPC in practicing crisis communication strategy. The study will take into account the following three cases of crises that the Commission encountered : first the case of the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele on July 26, 2018; second the death of General Seare and General

Gezai Abera on June 24, 2019 and finally the case of Jawar Mohammed's 'safety call' for his supporters via social media on October 23, 2019.

1.2. Objective of the study

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess the crisis communication practice & challenges of the FPC using selected cases.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

The Specific Objectives of the study are to:

- Describe the crisis communication practice the FPC utilized to manage the selected crises.
- Find out crisis major challenges the FPC faced in the process of communicating the crises selected for this study.
- Investigating stakeholders' such as media engagement and consultation of the FPC during those crises.
- Identify the major reactions of the community to the response of the FPC during those crises.

1.3. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions as follows:

1. What are the practices of crisis communication at the FPC to manage the selected crises?
2. What are the major challenges the FPC faced in the process of communicating the crises selected for this study?
3. How did the stakeholders' such as media engaged in consultation of the FPC during those crises?
4. How did the community react to the crises response of the FPC during those incidents?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The main aim of the study is to assess the crisis communication practice & challenges in the FPC. It helps to understand how security sectors and concerned bodies work together in a coordinated manner during crises. Further it helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the FPC in handling crises. Moreover, it may serve as a starting point or springboard for further studies in crisis communication for Police institutions in Ethiopia. This research would help to fill a knowledge gap that has existed in practical application and management of crisis communication strategy in the FPC. Likewise, it provides the FPC with further information on the need and importance of designing and applying crisis communication strategy in an effective manner.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This descriptive qualitative study assesses crisis communication practice and challenge of the FPC, even though; the FPC operated in dangerous crisis situation and critical environment from 2018-2019, the researcher could not use all existing problem. Thus, this study is limited to the following three particular cases: the death of Engineer Simegnaw Bekele, the death of General Seare and General Gezai Abera and that of prominent Oromo politicians, Jawar Mohammed. The cases are assessed at the level of FPC emphasizing on key informants with varying backgrounds and good knowledge of the topic being studied. The researcher is going to do this research from January 1, to June 30. 2020.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study can be the absence of similar organizations with the FPC at federal level to compare and contrast the practice. In addition, the researcher could not find research papers specifically conducted in crisis communication of the Police institutions. Moreover; some participants who are going to be selected from FPC and others may not be familiar with subject matter to conduct in-depth interview and FGD. The reform process that the country embarked upon has not yet touched the ground. Hence peace and security is not fully ensured. Most of the informants of this research are members and leadership of the Police. Therefore; the researcher may not get some interviewees due to shortage of time or unpredictable circumstances like corona virus pandemic.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This literature review section is designed to explore the crisis communication practices and challenge experiences the literature offers. It provides the conceptual and theoretical framework to examine the commission's crisis communication strategies when communicating with the public and its shareholders during crises. The literature review includes diverse sources including books on crisis communication, theories that related to the case, scholarly articles and other relevant sources.

2.2. Definition of Crisis

According to Coombs (2009), there is no one, universally accepted definition of crisis; however, there are many conceptual similarities in the definitions even when the definitions are not exactly the same. As Detrani, (2011), "*a crisis is an incident that occurs suddenly, often unexpectedly, and demands a quick response*". It interferes with normal activities and creates distrust and anxiety. It can be natural or man-made. It can threaten the reputation of top official and an organization, a well-managed crisis, however, can not only presume reputations and credibility but can also enhance them and added crises are atypical events that might be predictable, but are not expected when they occur.

Fearn-Banks (1996) noted that, a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as publics, products, services or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization. Friedman (2002) added that crisis is not necessarily a bad thing. It may be a radical change for good as well as bad. .Zaremba (2015) asks if daily routine problems can be considered to be crises? Debate exists about the level of harm necessary for an event to qualify as a crisis. From other perspectives, the question of the magnitude of a crisis is best understood as a matter of personal, community and even cultural perception (Sellnow and Seeger, 2013).

Moreover, crises excite high expectations for communication and authorities are challenged to manage them efficiently. Complex crisis situations occupy the attention of several agents and require fluent information exchange not only among the authorities responsible for crisis management but also citizens directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. Vos, Lund, Reich and Harro-Loit (2011) said that crises draw a lot of media attention and news owing to the latest developments in mass communications is disseminated more rapidly than ever before. Thus, there is apparent pressure to communicate efficiently in crisis situations.

Communication in crises such as large-scale accidents, natural disasters and crime (e.g. a school shooting, terrorist attack) requires special care. On the other hand, Griese (2002) noted that daily problems and challenges should not being considered “crises”. He says, a true crisis may threaten the very survival of the organization. If an incident never threatens the survival of our organization, it is not deemed crises. Some crises that could threaten government organization look out for the welfare and security of political body.

Fearn-Banks (2011)state that there are three possible results of a crisis: (a) The organization is put out of business, ruined, possibly sued, and key executives are possibly charged with crimes; (b) the organization continues to exist, but it has lost some image and respect in its publics’ eyes, and perhaps a great deal of financial position; (c) the organization, in a hard-fought battle, has won a war of public opinion and is seen as favorably as before or perhaps more favorably. Some types of organization suffer crises, loss of reputations, and great financial loss but never seem to go out of business no matter what they do.

Sellnow and Seeger (2014), describe that crises are increasingly important social, political, economic and environmental forces and arguably create more change more quickly than any other single phenomenon. Crises have the potential to do great harm, creating widespread and systematic disruption. But they may also be forces for constructive change, growth and renewal. They can quickly reshape institutions, create shifts in demographics and populations, alter ecosystems, undermine economic stability and change widely held beliefs.

2.3. Classification of Crises

According to Griese, (2002) crises that often confront our society as societal crises are crises natural disasters, such as floods and Earthquakes, accidents, such as airplane crash, car accident, civil disorders, such as riots, and war, civil disorders and protest, government actions, activities of government may threaten survival of an organization or individual. Moreover, media coverage is a critical issue and an organization frequently reported can face crises. The other is labor unrest where an organization may be affected by an unhappy workforce; crime and any number of crime illegal acts may capture national interest and by generating citizen outrage that escalate in to crises. In addition, scandals such as when leaders of an organization show criminal action or event regarded as morally or legally wrong and causing general public outrage may be the core of a crisis. Furthermore, negative media coverage also threatens government or non-governmental organization.

According to Tench and Yeomans (2009) there are key principles in crisis management based on the experience of leading crisis consultants over many years and influenced by the analysis of crises in a range of international settings, with various commercial and non-commercial situations. They stated as follows: define the real problem; this is the most critical aspect of effective public relations crisis management that is defined both the short-term problem address the situation right now and the long-term problem to ensure the brand/corporation recovers in terms of both market share and reputation, centralize or at least control information flow; this applies to items of information both coming in and going out.

As noted by Peter, (2008) a crisis plan has become an indispensable asset in our fast-changing society. Immunity does not exist, but tackling crises and turning them into an opportunity is an art. Effective, fast communication can even strengthen a company's reputation. He added that stakeholders and the public judge an organization by the manner in which a crisis is tackled. When human interests are placed before those of a business, the company is often granted a second chance and reacting efficiently and effectively is the key imperative.

Tench and Yeomans, (2009) state that there are ten key principles in crisis management they are starting to define the real problem, centralize or at least control information flow, isolate a crisis team from daily business concerns, assume a worst-case planning position, do not fully depend on

one individual, always resist the combative instinct., understand why the media are there, remember all constituents (stakeholders)., contain the problem, recognize the value of short-term sacrifice.

2.4. Meaning of Communication and Crisis Communication:

Detrani, (2011) explained that communication as an important element in crisis management. To use it effectively, the practitioner have to understand basic communication concepts, such as a sender, a message, a receiver and provision of feedback. He added that interpersonal communication, the way in which message is communicated has a great importance. In interpersonal communication, more than 60% of information communicated in body language, more than 30% of the meaning is in voice tone inflection of the words and only about 7% of the meaning is in word spoken. However, Griese, (2002) contend this concept; “If it isn’t interpersonal it isn’t communicated.”

Moreover, public and victim do not have the same perception about the crisis; but practitioners deal with public perception not that of victim. As noted by Coombs, (2015) crisis communication is the lifeblood of crisis management. When crisis communication is ineffective, the crisis management effort is also ineffective. As stated by Management in general must recognize the value of crisis communication strategic and the value of crisis management. Too many people think that crisis management means having a crisis management plan or responding when a crisis hits. This is a very reactive and rather limited approach to crisis management. A richer, more proactive approach to crisis management explores the entire process. Managers should think of crisis management as akin to SWOT analysis. Through crisis management, organizations identify that the weaknesses are what an organization is failing to do to address threats and prepare for crises.

Strengths are the elements of crisis management an organization does well. Opportunities are the resources an organization can access before, during, and after a crisis. Threats are those factors that can evolve into crises. A quick crisis SWOT analysis will awaken management to the need to take crisis management and crisis communication very seriously. As explained by Lindberg, (2008) crisis communication is the information that is exchanged by and between public

authorities, organizations, the media, affected individuals and groups before, during and after a crisis.

According to Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) the three-phase model of pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis has been adopted widely by organizational crisis theorists and communication scholars and is probably the most widely used framework, in part due to its simplicity. They added that during pre-crisis an emerging threat of pre-critical uncertainty develops and interacts with other aspects of a system. This process is typically described as an incubation or gestation process where the magnitude of a threat grows and creates dynamic non-linear interactions. Often, this incubation involves a risk judged by managers as minor interacting in a non-linear and disproportional way with other factors. In some cases, threats converge or connect and interact with other deficiencies or fallacious assumptions about risk. In addition, Ray, (1999) refers to the pre-crisis stage as the warning stage, which in some cases only becomes apparent after the actual crisis has occurred. This phase may or may not include signs of an approaching crisis.

According to Coombs, (2015) crisis prevention is proactive crisis management. The goal of crisis prevention is to avoid a crisis. Another term for prevention is mitigation. Mitigation means to lessen the effect of something. Many crises cannot be prevented; crisis managers can hope only to mitigate the occurrence or the effects of a crisis. Prevention is used to capture both stopping something from happening and hindering something from happening. Crisis managers take actions designed to eliminate a crisis threat or to reduce the likelihood of the threat manifesting into a crisis. Issues management, risk management, and reputation management all provide ideas for developing crisis prevention.

Moreover, Coombs, (2015) argue that the crisis prevention process is a combination of signal detection and correction. Signal detection attempts to find crisis warning signs, while correction is designed to reduce or eliminate the threat. Combined, the two form the five-step crisis prevention process: (1) identify the sources to scan, (2) collect the information, (3) analyze the information, (4) take preventative action if warranted, and (5) evaluate the effectiveness of the threat education. The first three steps involve signal detection, and the last two involve correction. Elements of the three proactive management functions can be combined to create a comprehensive crisis

prevention program. The information sources, collection tools, and analytic criteria used in scanning are employed in monitoring.

As to Fearn-Banks, (2007) crisis detection also refers to a system within the organization in which key personnel are immediately notified of a crisis. An organization has a considerable advantage if it knows about a crisis before its publics do, especially before the news media get the tip. This gives the organization time to draft a statement, make preparations for a news conference, notify the crisis team, and call in spokespersons. Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) explained that the crisis stage, as discussed earlier, begins with the trigger event and a general recognition that a crisis has indeed occurred. The trigger event is usually but not always some dramatic, sudden occurrence that signals a severe disruption of the system and onset of harm or the potential for harm.

The recognition that a crisis has occurred is often accompanied by extreme emotional arousal, stress, fear, anger, shock, general disbelief and sometimes denial. The crisis stage is where harm is initiated and where a majority of the direct damage occurs. Harm may take many forms and may extend beyond the boundaries of the immediate scene. In other cases, the harm may be more limited. Mitigation activity, containment and damage limitation during the crisis stage by crisis responders, managers and participants may significantly reduce the harm. According to Fearn-Banks, (2011) post-crisis stage is an evaluation and critique of the crisis. We're warning signs heeded? In most natural disasters and frequently in other crises, stories were done about how the company, city, or country was warned that the crisis would occur.

Finally, Sellnow and Seeger (2013) stated that post-crisis, begins when the harm, drama, confusion and uncertainty of the crisis dissipate and some sense of order is re-established. It is generally accompanied by both a sense of relief and recognition of the loss that has occurred. It is also a time of intense investigation and analysis that includes efforts to create plausible explanations of what went wrong; why, how, who is to blame; and what should be done to prevent future crises. Much of the post crisis determination of blame and responsibility involves elaborate arguments, strategies and accounts of explanation, excuses and apologies.

Furthermore; the pre-crisis, crisis, post-crisis framework has also been adopted by the professional community in public relations as a basic conceptual framework for understanding crises and developing strategies for management (Coombs, 2007). As stated by Lindberg, (2008)

the public expect public authorities to communicate before, during and after a crisis and inadequate communication has always aggravated crises and led to lack of confidence in public authorities and democratic processes. A good strategy development model for public relations and communication management and best Practices of Crisis Communication will be discussed in the body of this paper.

2.5. Importance of Communication in Crises Situations

As stated by Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) communication is a factor bringing about stability, order and balance, even in the face of chaos and significant changes in both the topics of communication and the communicators often accompany a crisis. Crisis changes the agenda for both public and private discourse. Crisis can create a sense of commonality and community and thus modifies the climate and tone of communication. Shared values, needs, goals, threats and interdependencies may become salient in the face of a crisis.

Stakeholders may communicate in new ways, exhibiting high levels of cooperation, creative problem solving, and collaborative decision making. As explained by Haddow and Haddow, (2009) communications has become an increasingly critical function in crisis management. The dissemination of timely and accurate information to the public, elected and community officials, and the media plays a major role in the effective management of disaster response and recovery activities. Communicating preparedness, prevention, and mitigation information promotes actions that reduce the risk of future disasters. Communicating policies, goals, and priorities to staff, partners, and participants enhances support and promotes a more efficient disaster management operation. In communicating with the public, establishing a partnership with the media is keys to implement a successful strategy.

Mawby, (2002) added that, the image of a Police force develops not only through active media and public relations but also through the routine undertaking of Police work, involving countless Police–public encounters which create impression of the Police, even though, the main work of Police is not with image, the work of each individuals have core role in image building. Every day Police public encounters responding to crises and other calls investigation of crimes, crime prevention advice, traffic stops, public order confrontations, legitimacy of the public Police is potentially held up for scrutiny when any policing activity is engaged in. The Police service has to

seek to communicate its key message, to refute what it perceives as misguided media coverage to correct inaccurate reportage during crises. Doorley and Garcia (2007) state that effective crisis response including both in what an organization does and what it says provides organization with a competitive advantage and can even enhance reputation. Ineffective crisis response can cause significant harm to a company's operations, reputation, and competitive position.

- **Models for crisis communication collaboration**

As stated by Brataas (2018) Getting messages across in a timely, compassionate and understandable way takes planning and collaboration between several parts of an organization.



‘The 4C Model’ circles of crisis communication collaboration describes how the CEO, the communications team (COMM) and human resources (HR) need to collaborate in times of crisis. As shown by Brataas, (2011).



The ‘Communication Product Loop’ can be expanded or changed based on type of organization, crisis and so on as shown by Brataas, (2011).

2.6. Effect of rumors during crisis

Brataas, (2018) noted that in any crisis, rumors and misinformation spread quickly so to counter this, it is important to use social media to kill rumors and misreporting. Moreover, to magnify

official messages, detect trends and issues early and correct rumors and misinformation. Crisis communication team assisted with social media monitoring and provided twice- daily reports on trends and rumors to officials handling the crisis. According to Kapferer, (2004) rumors arise when information is scarce. In the exchange of information constituted by rumors are the principles that rule all forms of exchange. Information circulates because it has value, because it is worth its weight in gold. Many rumors stem from secrets that have been leaked.

As explained by Fearn-Banks, (2011) as we make progress in technology, we also advance the possibilities of rumor. The internet is a great source of information and news, but it is an even greater source of misinformation and rumor. Opinion, guesses, assumptions as well as rumor present tragic consequences to people who are victimized because Internet users often believe everything, they read is true.

As per Kimmel (2004) rumor spreads rapidly, it is difficult to control, is invisible yet nearly impossible to ignore, and can have damaging and perhaps even deadly consequences. Again, Fearn-Banks, (2011) said that this was not the case with print media and it is even further from the truth on the Internet. Internet data just looks like factual information. He added that what Internet blogs, sites, and social media have done is provide faster, easier ways to circulate rumors and thereby cause crises for organizations and individuals. Of course, the new technology can also be used to fight rumor, Public Relations, in addition to news conferences, monitored and participated in social media conversations to dispel the rumors. They also posted video footage of the recovery of burned tourist sites on its website.

2.7. Social Media Rumors

Fearn-Banks (2011) noted that where word-of-mouth rumors have put organizations in crises for years, electronic rumors have given rumors wings. Social media and e-mail rumors can spread to thousands of people in seconds and, just like spoken rumor, they can change elements of the story with each transmission. It is better to set up a web page to fight rumors. Fighting back with a proactive website is one tactic. If an organization has a website and does not address a circulated rumor on it, it may make the organization appear guilty. To protect an organization, he advised three tactics for fighting all social media, including e-mail rumors: pay attention, read the rumor and think about it, and put up a fight. However, silence equals assent, at times, a decision must be

made between fighting a rumor with public relations and fighting a rumor with lawyers. In such condition public relations is the first step, if that does not work or is not feasible, call the lawyers. Another tactic to fight social media rumor is to ignore the problem. Think strategically and devise the best plan for the problem. The other is speaking with one voice and clear, consistent messages is mandatory and communicate your concern, even if you are not guilty of the charges, be concerned. Furthermore, adopt an appropriate tone and choose formal or informal language depending on the nature of the crisis and seize the opportunity and this is a chance not only to diffuse the crisis but also to build new alliances and reach goals.

Doorley and Garcia (2007) explained that unless we fight rumor, they arise and are or not believed when official information is lacking. Rumors can be avoided along with their attendant negative consequences if organizations recognize the need to provide sufficient clarifying detail and information as early as possible in life of a disruptive event. They added that the most important element in case of rumor is that a rumor exists in the absence of secure standards of evidence and thereby it is to be taken by the recipient to be true. However, in the presence of secure standards of evidence a rumor will not arise.

2.8. Detecting a Rumor and Preventing its Spread

A rumor is a story or statement in general circulation without confirmation or certainty as to facts and a rumor is information passed by word of mouth and electronic communications with no verification of fact and no credible source. Kimmel, (2004) added that rumors have been a basic element of human interaction for as long as people have had questions about their social environment As per Fearn-Banks (2011), most of the time crises can, and often do, begin with rumors, in fact, a crisis can actually be a negative rumor and fighting such rumor is an important task in crisis control and crisis communications.

The rumors themselves may cite a specific person or institution that sounds credible, but the source is not readily available for verification. Kimmel,(2004) also added that spreading rumors becomes a means by which people try to get the facts, to obtain enough information so that it reduces their psychological discomfort and relieves their fears. Therefore, people who have trouble making a success of their lives and careers are most likely to believe and spread rumors. The steps organizations may take to minimize the chances of a crisis caused by rumor are,

establish a rumor center or rumor hotline to report any rumors circulating, employees and customers would report a negative rumor as soon as it is heard, periodically train representatives of the organization or company in rumor control. Conduct rumor workshops prior to the circulation of rumors to advise personnel on what actions should be taken in the event of a damaging rumor and develop a rumor communication plan, and make sure the company or organization has such strong positive relationships with its key publics that the public will at least doubt a negative rumor, if not totally disbelieve it. Kimmel (ibid) further noted many managers have learned the hard way that a failure to react quickly and effectively to false rumors can have devastating consequences. In addition keep employees informed; remember that all employees and internal members are spokespersons and employees left in the dark are fertile ground for the growth of rumors commonly spread by grapevine. Even if events that are bad news, such as layoffs, are a possibility in the near future, give employees real information and promise to keep them up to date. This is more advantageous than letting rumors circulate, because the rumors take on imagined and more negative characteristics than the truth. Informed employees can be a organization's strongest supporters and loudest defenders. Finally evaluate the extent of a rumor, how dangerous can it be? Think negatively, imagining the worst-case scenario, determine the best action, if any.

2.9. Fighting the Rumor

Kimmel,(2004) stated that crises can severely damage organization and brand images, undermine its credibility, stimulate consumer boycotts, adversely affect employee job performance and satisfaction, and have far-reaching effects on financial markets. According to Fearn-Banks, (2011) the following suggestions are general steps organizations may take to fight a negative rumor that is already circulating. When a rumor seems to be developing or circulating, disseminate to publics complete, accurate information that is contradictory to the message of the rumor. Do not mention the rumor itself. You do not want to advance its circulation, after a rumor has circulated, analyze it. What is its probable origin? Why was it started? What is its possible impact? What are people saying? Do nothing. Sometimes denial draws more attention than silence. Some rumors do go away. When choosing this strategy, be careful that, if the rumor persists, it will not be damaging. Deny the rumor publicly and vehemently, and prove it has no basis in truth. Once the rumor is shown to be unsubstantiated, a person who passes it on might be challenged with "That is

absolutely untrue. However, if the rumor is already widespread and potentially serious, a news conference and news releases is in order. The purpose is to show how erroneous the rumor is. In this news conference, do not repeat the rumor itself unnecessarily. To be convincing, get an outside expert on the subject to discredit the rumor. Place ads in high-circulation publications. This is a powerful tool for reaching great numbers of people if your message is convincing. If the message is not convincing, the ad may promote the rumor. Before placing an ad, be sure the rumor is totally untrue, not premature. In the latter case, ads can cause more harm than good. Kimmel, (2004) state that often a last resort when other strategies for rumor control fail, a company may bring legal action to bear against those persons who are implicated in the generation or subsequent spread of malicious falsehoods. Lawsuits also may be undertaken against media sources responsible for presenting false stories about a company.

2.10. Working with Media during Crises

Brataas (2018) said that even with a large part of the world using social media on a daily basis, traditional media should not be forgotten when planning for or handling a crisis and people still turn to local news and press releases and one- on- one interviews continue to be an effective way of getting messages across. Michaelson and Stacks (2010) also added that media telling the public something is happening and that they need to pay attention to receive additional information, Directing the public to sources of additional information they can use to protect themselves from a potential risk, mobile text message will become increasingly important, the traditional media will continue to play a critical role as a source for information following an alert.

As to Michaelson and Stacks (ibid), the media continue to serve as an important emergency information system during a crisis and they do this very well. Moreover, radio is very resilient and flexible and, in many cases, local stations have switched format to provide 24-hour coverage of an event, including call-ins. In other cases, radio stations have linked up with social media and Web systems like Google Maps to provide robust, real-time disaster information services. Now, media outlets can provide immediate and continuous updates on a crisis through contributions from people experiencing the crisis. These contributors provide information by calling in on cell phones and sending information, such as pictures, video, and updates on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. This has increased the demand on organizations to keep pace with

information delivery. Fearn-Banks (2011) this is done by using both traditional media and social media channels to provide information and updates on the crisis response both immediately and continuously.

The public's picture of a crisis is largely shaped by the media. The need for information in a crisis is huge, and mass media are nearly always first and have the greatest impact. A false picture will be difficult to adjust later. Doorley and Garcia, (2007) noted that during a crisis, an organization have choose communication tactics, various communication options should be considered like face to face communication and opportunities for personal involvement, organizational media (sometimes called controlled media), news media (uncontrolled media) and advertising and promotional media (another form of controlled media). While all of these tools can be used by any organization, not every tool is appropriate for each issue.

Media relations is central to crisis communication and understanding how the media operate enables organizations to prepare for meetings with the media and to understand how their responses are likely to be reported and this requires sensitivity to journalistic processes. The media will seek alternative information sources when organizational representatives are not available. Moreover, the absence of official comments from spokespersons may leave the organization looking evasive, unresponsive, or unconcerned about the community (Coombs and Holladay, 2015). Local, state, and federal officials may be the featured spokespersons in media reports if organizational representatives are unavailable for comment. Letting others supply information about the crisis is dangerous because it may create the perception the organization is not in control of the situation or is concealing information. Hence, an organizational spokesperson should meet with the media in the early stages of the crisis to disseminate information and participate in framing the crisis.

Media inquiries should be met with quick, accurate, open, and consistent responses Coombs, (2007). The initial communication about the crisis is critical. Responses should be quick because the public's first impressions about the organization in crisis can affect their perceptions of subsequent communication. Responses in the first 24 hours help shape the organization's public image Coombs, (2007).

Additionally, the spokesperson (s) should communicate with “one voice,” meaning efforts should be coordinated to maintain a consistent message. In many cases, multiple spokespersons are needed. Other reason organizations should establish a presence with journalists is to discourage others from emerging as unofficial spokespersons. Frustrated journalists who find management to be unresponsive are likely to turn to other sources. Readily available employees might be seen as potential sources and able to provide a “human angle” on the crisis. Although organizations discourage employees from talking to the media, it would be unrealistic to expect employees to remain mum. Because at the very least employees will face questions from friends and family, it is important for them to have accurate information to provide to their personal networks (Coombs, 2007). When they are informed, employees who are confronted by the media can supply answers that are consistent with the organization’s perspective and assist in the framing process. First responders often are key sources of information about casualties, fires, pollution, and contamination hazards because they have first-hand knowledge about managing the physical aspects of the crisis. Factual, information from first responders may be used to frame the crisis in ways that are unfavorable to the organization. If first responders are feature prominently in media reports and organizational spokespersons are absent, the organization may not appear to be in control of the crisis. The point is that the media need to fill the information vacuum and the absence of organizational spokespersons will not prevent journalists from covering the crisis.

Although the public may want to know the cause(s) of a crisis, this may take weeks or months to uncover. Brataas, (2018) the media and the community may be frustrated by delays in uncovering causes. The media may also pursue interviews with other information sources to determine causes. These sources may be less concerned with preserving the organization’s reputation. Organizations are advised to report that the cause of the crisis is “under investigation” because it usually is true because causes are rarely immediately apparent and it suggests the organization is in control and understand journalism deadlines and work to accommodate them. During a crisis, it is important to be available if necessary, around the clock to help reporters get the facts right, before their deadline. Even print media outlets face short deadlines because of their online Web editions. In the past, response to media inquiries could be prioritized by their deadlines. Today, most media outlets have the same deadlines, and this requires a revamping of the way emergency information is provided. In general, media outlets function in real time or close to it.

2.11. Working with Social Media during Crisis

As explained by Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) the relevance of social media to crisis communication is not in question. In fact, organizations and government agencies are deeply engaged in current social media technologies such as Twitter and Facebook. Moreover, these enterprises have long understood that they cannot be competitive or effective without a well-established Internet presence. Facebook and Twitter will evolve, or even eventually be replaced by new forms of technology.

Our focus here is the application of social media to crisis communication and in this concern, Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) said that Veil, Buehner and Palenchar (2011) make a compelling argument that, “used thoughtfully, social media can improve risk and crisis communication efforts” and the primary objective, then, is to better understand how organizations and agencies can make the best use of social media when responding to crises. Austin and Jin (2015) said that media plays an essential role in crisis communication as crisis information production and dissemination are critical for crisis preparedness, crisis response, and crisis recovery, social media and crisis Communication provides a unique and timely contribution to the field of crisis communication. As researcher, focus on social media rather than other media outlets as social media is influencing the practice of crisis communication.

Sellnow and Seeger (2013) noted that digital communication technology, including social media and handheld devices, has significantly altered the ecology of crisis communication. Some researchers argue that these technologies have repositioned those who are at the center of the crisis as active sources and senders of information rather than as passive receivers. The emergence of social media is changing how warnings are disseminate and warning theories do not currently account for this dynamic, interactive and highly networked form of communication. Social media creates the opportunity for audiences and the public to become the creators of warning messages and simultaneously to send and receive warning messages.

Information about a crisis reaches publics through the media more than through any other means. A negative story was thought more newsworthy than a positive one; the media consider your positive news “puffery” News media coverage of a crisis usually falls into four stages. Moreover,

the crisis communicators should realize these stages and be prepared to provide correct information and make explanations at each stage. The first stage is breaking news, it is the immediate shocking or dramatic impact and detailed information is usually not available; misinformation is often broadcast and printed and this stage ends when causes and explanation are present. Fearn-Banks, (2011) state that the second stage begins when concrete details are becoming available; an accounting of the fatalities and the funds raised was a sign of this stage. The third Stage often involves analysis of the crisis and its aftermath. How are victims coping? What was done as remedy the situation?

More attention will be given to how and why. The fourth stage is an evaluation and critique of the crisis. Was our warning signs heeded? In most natural disasters and frequently in other crises, do stories were done about how the organization, company, city, or country was warned that the crisis would occur? This stage also signals a return to normalcy and a consideration of what lessons have learned and it might include anniversary stories. The application of social media technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Google Maps increases the speed and richness of information shared across and within the groups. Of special interest is the information generated by the public and shared with others in the public space and the public is already using social media to share and modify information. The increasing use of social media by the public during crises and disasters puts the public now at the center of a crisis and disaster, conveying important information and response needs (ibid).

Brataas, (2018) noted that social media have changed the communication landscape of a disaster or crisis and Social media can be used to kill myths and rumors. Thus an increasing role of citizen journalism in the area of disaster media coverage and response and citizen journalists, with their local and in-depth knowledge of local communities, can provide comprehensive and detailed information about areas affected by a crisis for use by official first responding agencies. The public becomes a much more active and potentially empowered participant in the event, as opposed to a passive receiver of responder-produced messages. Moreover, incorporating social media as means of receiving immediate feedback from those enduring crisis circumstances is recommended.

Brataas (ibid) further states that Police forces in many parts of the world profit from having an established presence on social media, in everyday life as well as in times of crisis. When the bombs went off near the finish line of the Boston Marathon in 2013, the Boston Police benefitted greatly from their #Tweet from the beat Twitter interactions with citizens since 2011, which helped ensure the public that the Police Twitter account was one they could trust. Several Police forces also utilize social media to show a lighter side of their work. One especially popular post suggested to local resident how they should behave if interviewed by the media about winter storms. It was shared more than 5,000 times and combined serious preparation advice with hints such as current research in crisis communication has recognized emergent crisis types caused by the rapid expansion of social media and an increasingly globalized economy. An increasing number of companies, organizations, and individuals are using social media outlets to gauge the sentiments of their publics, prevent crises, or cope with crises.

By keeping this symbiotic relationship in mind, the public relations professional will be in a more proactive position during a crisis and feel more in control of the organization's bad news. With new communications technology, it is possible to get information out to the masses. The social media makes it possible to communicate with vast numbers of people through Twitter, Facebook, e-mail, blogs, websites, and any new methods that have developed. Coombs, (2007) said that crisis managers must be cognizant of their social media choices, utilization during a crisis and crisis managers must integrate social media into their crisis communication efforts because of the growing importance of social media in crisis communication.

Regarding management of social media Brataas, (2018) state that it is a good idea to post 'rules' on Facebook and other platforms regarding what kind of comments will be accepted, for example in the form of a few sentences: We welcome your comments and invite you to share our ideas on our Facebook page. We ask that you do so without using full language, sexist remarks or otherwise inappropriate words. Please be 'on topic' and do not threaten or defame any person or organization. Failure to follow these guidelines might result in posts being deleted or individuals being banned from commenting. Having guidelines in place makes it easier for the communications team to assess whether comments are acceptable or not, and it helps to have concrete rules to refer to when informing individuals that their comments will be deleted. (It is always a good practice to keep a screen shot of the offending post on file, in case the person

submitting it or others starts debating the ‘censorship.’) Removing offending messages should be a last resort, and crisis management as well as the CEO should be told that you will allow negative comments and open criticism. Removing a negative comment can easily result in a blowback, and as long as comments conform to your posted guidelines, they should be allowed.

2.12. Theoretical Framework

2.12.1. Crisis Communication Theory

As explained by Sellnow and Seeger, (2013) crisis communication theories problematize the messages and meaning construction process in all forms of human interaction and coordination that surround these threatening and high uncertainty events. Doorley and Garcia (2007) state that crisis communicators speak of the “Golden Hour” of crisis response: the early phases when the opportunity to influence the outcome is the greatest. As to Tench and Yeomans (2009) many corporate public relations departments have lost responsibility for crisis communications to management consulting firms and marketing departments, some have lost responsibility for corporate identity programs to marketing departments, some have lost government relations to legal departments, and some have lost internal employee communications to human resources departments.

Zaremba (2015) said that, crisis communication involves identifying internal and external receivers who must receive information during times of crisis. Crisis communicators conceive, create, and disseminate messages to these internal and external receivers, and prepare to receive and respond to feedback from these audiences. Further he noted that good theories could help people understand various phenomena; several theories about communication and organizations are relevant to crisis communication study. Understanding these theories can help practitioners (1) preempt crises and (2) respond to crises when confronted with them will be discussed.

2.12.2. Excellence Theory

Fearn-Banks (2011), stated that J. Grunig and Repper (1992) identified theories on strategic management, publics, and issues as having two primary propositions. Both are conducive to a study of crisis communications programs. Most recent public relations research builds on the *excellence theory* developed by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and later expanded by J. Grunig and L.

Grunig (1992). The excellence theory is based on types of public relations practices called “models.”

Botan and Hazleton, (2006) said that Public relations contribute to strategic management by scanning the environment to identify publics affected by the consequences of decisions or who might affect the outcome of decisions. An excellent public relations department communicates with these publics to bring their voices into strategic management, thus making it possible for stakeholder publics to participate in organizational decisions that affect them. The senior public relations executive is a member of the dominant coalition of the organization, or the senior public relations executive has a direct reporting relationship to senior managers who are part of the dominant coalition and the public relations function seldom will be involved in strategic management nor will public relations have the power to affect key organizational decisions unless the senior public relations executive is part of or has access to the group of senior managers with the greatest power in the organization.

Fearn-Banks (2011) stated that Excellence theory is the predominant public relations/crisis communication theory that is proposed by Grunig and Todd Hunt in 1984 and it is based on types of public relations practices called “models.” The four models defined by Grunig and Hunt provide a way of classifying the types of public relations that individuals and organizations may practice. Further in a spectrum of excellence of public relations programs, Model 1 would be the least desirable. Model 4 would be the most desirable, or could be said to be the “most excellent.” Models 2 and 3 fall between these two extremes. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) explained that the term model to mean a simplified representation of reality, and it is to simplified representations of how practitioners think about and practice public relations. He also added that most recent public relations research builds on the excellence theory developed by J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and later expanded by Grunig and Grunig (1992).

- **Model 1-Press Agency/Publicity Model**

Tench and Yeomans (2009) explained that press agency is one-way communication: no dialogue with the intended audience is required and the main objective is to put forward one particular view of the world through the media and other channels. Fearn-Banks (2011) also added that in this model, public relations practitioners are interested in making their organizations or products

known. Doorley and Garcia (2007) explained that the guiding principle here is to get favorable publicity not to try to ensure accuracy and truthful reporting. They added that this model can place the goals of accuracy and truth in second place to publicity. While this model can produce good results for the client organization, at least over the short term, it can be bad for the various constituencies (for example, the media, customers, employees, and the community) and this is the approach that gives public relations a bad reputation.

Fearn-Banks (2011) noted that the practitioners' abiding slogan, "All publicity is good publicity," indicates a one-way transfer of information from the organization to the public. Little or no research is required. There is no feedback. Grunig and Hunt (1984) revealed that this model was used by 15% of public relations practitioners. Later, Grunig and Grunig (1992) found the earlier data to be inaccurate and reported that most public relations practitioners, unfortunately, still fall into this category. As practitioners become more knowledgeable and as the profession of public relations grows in respect, the number of practitioners using this model is expected to decrease.

- **Model two: Public Information Model**

As stated by Tench and Yeomans (2009) Public information is related to press agency in that one-way information dissemination is the purpose of the activity, but it differs from press agency in that truth is fundamental to its purpose. The information has to be accurate, true and specific, then in aim is to inform rather than persuade. Doorley and Garcia, (2007) added that the focus here is on the communication of objective information, generally without regard to the self-interests of the organization or client for whom the PR person works. In theory, the constituency wins. The client organization, often a government agency or nonprofit, can also win. Nevertheless, we would argue that public relations practitioners have a responsibility to advocate for the client, not just to disseminate information. Furthermore, Fearn-Banks, (2011) said that Public Information Model is characterized by the desire to report information journalistically. It is different from Press Agency model in that truth is essential. Most public relations practice in government agencies today falls into this category. Companies that simply distribute news releases are examples of this model. Public Information Model is also involves a one-way transfer of information from the organization to the public. Little or no research is required. There may be some type of evaluation, such as readership surveys or the counting of news clips. Public Information Model is most common in corporations.

- **Model 3—Two-Way Asymmetric Model**

According to Fearn-Banks, (2011) this model, also called the scientific persuasion model, the public relations practitioner uses social science theory and research, such as surveys and polls, to help persuade publics to accept the organization's point of view. There is some feedback, but the organization does not change because of communications management. In asymmetric public relations programs of this type, the organization rules, this rule is always knows best and its attitude is that publics should adhere to the organization's viewpoints. An example of asymmetric action is a letter informing a public of a new policy or a recorded telephone message with no technology available for returning messages.

Doorley and Garcia, (2007) also specify that the public relations practitioner conducts research to determine the views of a particular constituency and then uses that information to help achieve the client's objectives. In this model the client organization can win, at least over the short term. However, the constituency probably loses, and we would argue that this is a myopic and sometimes unethical approach. Tench and Yeomans, (2009) said that public communication campaigns fit in with the two-way asymmetric model of communication where a change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of target populations or persuasion is the organization's intention. This is still the case even though public sector communication may have the appearance of greater public involvement through social marketing strategies. Moreover public communication, particularly that of national governments and supranational governments such as the European Union, fits the asymmetric model of communication where a change in knowledge, attitudes or behavior is intended– for example, where the 'sender' of the message is engaged in motivating populations to drink less alcohol, eat less fat, exercise more regularly, give up smoking or support the introduction of the euro (European currency).

- **Model 4: Two-Way Symmetric Model**

Doorley and Garcia, (2007) explained that the Public Relations practitioner conducts research to determine the views of a particular constituency and then uses that information to help achieve the objectives of both the client organization and the constituency. This approach will most often produce a win-win outcome. Therefore, it can be useful in conflict resolution and in any public relations; program and it can help to address ethical questions, including that of advocacy versus

objectivity, by looking at the interests of both the client organization and its constituencies. As specified by Fearn-Banks (2011) the public relations practitioner in this model, also called the mutual understanding model, is an intermediary between the organization and its publics. The practitioner tries to achieve a dialogue, not a monologue as in the other models. Either management or the public may make changes in behavior because of the communications program. Research and social science theory are used not to persuade but to communicate. Effective public relations programs based on this model are said to be “excellent” programs. Symmetrical public relations programs negotiate compromise, bargain, listen, and engage in dialogue. The organization knows what the public want and need; the public, in turn, understand the organization’s needs and desires. An example is talking to consumers by telephone or at a public meeting in which the consumers can talk back and changes result. During crises, organizations are frequently forced, by circumstances, to practice symmetrical communications with adversarial publics. The new social media networks are a boon to the possibilities of two-way symmetrical practice. An organization can, if it desires, listen to its publics and make changes in its programs based on those communications.

Zerfass and van Ruler (2008) are illustrate that Public relations scholars have conducted extensive research on the extent to which organizations practice four models of public relations four typical ways of conceptualizing and conducting the communication function and to identify which of these models provides a normative framework for effective and ethical public relations. This research suggests that excellent departments design more of their communication programs on the two-way symmetrical model of collaboration and public participation than on three other typical models: press agentry (emphasizing only favorable publicity), public information (disclosing accurate information but engaging in no research or other form of two-way communication), or two-way asymmetrical (emphasizing only the interests of the organization and not the interests of publics). Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, (2002) also added that both research and conceptual development of the theory suggested that organizations could practice each of the models under certain contingent conditions and contribute to organizational effectiveness. They also suggested that using the two-way symmetrical model or a combination of the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models that we then called the mixed-motive model could almost always increase the contribution of public relations to organizational effectiveness.

2.12.3. System Theory

Miller, (2012) explained that systems or organismic metaphor views organizations not as self-contained and self-sufficient machines but as complex organisms that must interact with their environment to survive and systems theory did not originate in the study of organizations but rather in the fields of biology and Engineering. One of the key founders of the systems movement was Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a theoretical biologist who was interested in the study of “living systems” within his own academic field.

Ihlen, van Ruler and Fredriksson, (2009) obviously state that crisis communication is a rather traditional field, where system theory is predominant. The open system theory emphasizes that an organization is dependent on its environment, and that interdependence comes from a mutual need. In order to survive, it is assumed that an organization continually has to adapt to changes in the environment. Ihlen, van Ruler and Fredriksson, (ibid) the basic tenet of systems theory is that organizations are comprised of interdependent units that should work interdependently not independently. Systems theorists argue that each of these units is dependent either directly or indirectly on another and no unit should act autonomously. The organization must see itself as an interdependent whole; otherwise, the organization will not reach its potential. A theory is a prediction of how events and actions are related.

Ihlen, van Ruler and Fredriksson, (ibid) systems theory in Public Relations Systems theory is useful in public relations because it gives us a way to think about relationships. Generally, systems theory looks at organizations as made up of interrelated parts, adapting and adjusting to changes in the political, economic, and social environments in which they operate. Organizations have recognizable boundaries, within which there must be a communication structure that guides the parts of the organization to achieve organizational goals, parts of the organization to achieve organizational goals, Zaremba, (2015). Three system components: hierarchical ordering, interdependence, and permeability, System Processes System Properties concepts will be discussed. Ihlen, van Ruler and Fredriksson, (2009) said that in essence, the effect of units acting independently and not interdependently can create crises and limit the effectiveness of organizations when confronted with crisis. It is not difficult to imagine how a crisis could

intensify if Police in an intelligence do not share information with operation Police of the Police Commission could not be effective.

As explained by Zaremba (2015), crisis requires for cooperation, mutual interdependence and integrated work of different stakeholders to resolve crisis, during crisis even messages that are intended to create a reaction or a certain type of behavior are much more powerful when they are sent by several actors in the same way. The public relations apply systems theory not only to the prevent crises but also to communicate when crises arise. Zaremba, (ibid) when information is not transferred from one unit to another, executives are deprived of knowledge they need to respond intelligently to inquiries made during crises. Understanding systems theory and applying its tenets results in the creation of an information system that has a chance of carrying the urgency and deluge of information during crises.

Miller, (2012) noted that the first key principles of system theory is hierarchical ordering; its premise is that an organization is composed of systems and subsystems arranged in a hierarchy and system components are arranged in highly complex ways that involve subsystems and super-systems a hierarchical ordering. If you think about our body as a system, you can observe this hierarchy. Miller, (Ibid) your body is composed of a number of subsystems the cardiovascular system, the digestive system, the neurological system, and so forth. In turn, these systems are also made up of subsystems for example; the cardiovascular system includes the heart, lungs, and blood vessels. We could take this even further with a consideration of organ components, cells, and so on. Moreover, the same hierarchical ordering can be seen when considering the organization as a system. For example, let us look at a hospital as an organizational system and it consists of a number of departmental subsystems, including surgical units, recovery units, the emergency room, laboratories, and offices. These subsystems, in turn, are composed of smaller work groups and individuals.

As to Tench and Yeomans (2009) the second concept that characterizes system components is interdependence. The notion of interdependence implies that the functioning of one component of a system relies on other components of the system. Think again about the human body that is our body is a highly interdependent system in which the breakdown of one component would lead to breakdowns in other components and in the system as a whole. Tench and Yeomans (2009) added that third characteristic of system components is that they have permeable boundaries that allow

information and materials to flow in and out. The degree of permeability varies from system to system; some are relatively closed, whereas others are extremely open. However, all biological and social systems require some degree of permeability to survive. Permeability refers both to the system as a whole-which must be open to its environment and to the components within the system.

As to Miller, (2012) the other is system processes this is how these hierarchical, interdependent, and permeable components function in a system. At the most basic level, systems are characterized by input through put output processes. Miller, (Ibid) That is, a system “inputs” materials or information from the environment through its permeable boundaries. The system then works on these inputs with some kind of transformational process; this is “throughput.” Finally, the system returns the transformed “output” to the environment. For example, a furniture manufacturer will input raw materials, such as wood and fabric, transform these inputs into chairs and couches, and output these products to the buying public through retail outlets. Organizations also input and transform information. For example, an insurance claims adjuster must gather information about relevant damages, make decisions based on insurance coverage, and then output that information to the policyholder.

Miller (ibid) further noted that two kinds of processes characterize input through put output operations. The first of these is the process of exchange it is apparent in both input and output activities. That is, both the input of materials and information and the output of transformed materials and information require a process of exchange with the environment outside the system. Tench and Yeomans, (2006) said that obviously, this process of exchange is intimately related to the permeability of system boundaries, taking a systems perspective, it can be seen that public relations professionals have a boundary-spanning role and some organizations have highly permeable boundaries to facilitate the exchange process, whereas others are relatively closed. Tench and Yeomans added that second type of process is feedback; it is critical to the throughput portion of organizational functioning. Throughput involves the interdependent components of a system acting together. Feedback is information that helps to facilitate the interdependent functioning of system components. Two types of feedback are important to system functioning, the first of these is variously referred to as negative feedback, corrective feedback, or deviation-reducing feedback.

Miller, (ibid) the second type of feedback is known as positive, growth, or deviation-amplifying feedback. This is information that serves to change system functioning through growth and development. For example, our restaurant supervisor might notice that more and more customers are troubled by smoke while eating. Our supervisor, then, might suggest to higher management that the restaurant be transformed into a nonsmoking establishment. Miller, (ibid) this kind of feedback serves to change the entire system rather than maintain it in a steady state. Of course, there are times when these feedback systems get out (Miller, 2012). Furthermore, Miller state that four system properties are holism, equifinality, negative entropy, and requisite variety. Holism: the property of holism suggests that a system is “more than the sum of its parts.” The system property of equifinality states that a system can reach the same final state from differing initial conditions and by a variety of paths. Negative Entropy, entropy is the tendency of closed systems to run down. Requisite Variety a final system property again deals with the relationship between a system and its environment. Miller, (ibid) the property of requisite variety states that the internal workings of the system must be as diverse and complicated as the environment in which it is embedded. Miller summarized that when we look at an organization as a system, we see it as a collection of system components that are hierarchically arranged, interdependent, and permeable to each other and the environment. The organizational system is characterized by input through put output processes that require exchange with the environment and positive and negative system feedback.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the design, the approaches and how data were collected, what methods were used and the justifications. Further the various stages of the research, which includes the selection of informant, the data collection process and the process of data analysis, are also explained.

3.2. Research Design

In this study, the researcher employs descriptive design and uses qualitative research approach to examine the crises communication practices and challenges. As explained by Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, (2016), qualitative research methods are ideally suited to examining the world from different points of view. As noted by Marczyk, DeMatteo, Festinger, (2005), most researchers agree that the three general goals of scientific research are description, prediction, and understanding/ explanation. Description refers to the process of defining; classifying, and descriptive research is useful because it can provide important information regarding the average member of a group. Perhaps the most basic and easily understood goal of scientific research is description. Suresh, (2014), also added that design is mainly used to identify and describe the perception, awareness, behavior, attitude, knowledge and practices of people. As stated by Creswell, (2016) descriptive design is important to present facts concerning the nature and status of anything and it gives meaning to the quality and standing of facts that are going on.

Ogula (2005) noted that a research design as a plan, structure, and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions and control variance. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research implements interpretative approach which dictates the study of research problems and establishes meaning that can be associated with social or human problems. According to Tench and Yeomans, (2006) qualitative approaches are often used to explore areas about which no knowledge exists yet and results are expressed in words. Thus, in this study, descriptive design of qualitative approach was used to identify problems with current practices, justify current practices, make judgments, or determine other practices in similar situations.

According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research provides a complex understanding of a problem or situation. The more facets the researcher uncovers, the better; the more unpredictable aspects that surface, the better. Creswell also added that qualitative report multiple voices of participants and how people talk about things, their perspectives, how they describe it and how they see the world. It is also important when we need to listen to the actual words of a participant to obtain the best understanding of our central phenomenon. He further explained that qualitative research enables us to present a complex portrait of a project and present the many different perspectives individuals might have on the topic.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

According to Given, (2008) sample is the set of actual data sources that are drawn from a larger population of potential data sources. He added that approaches to selecting samples are typically divided between probability sampling and non-probability sampling, where the former uses a group's size in the population as the sole influence on how many of its members will be included in the sample, the later concentrates on selecting sample members according to their ability to meet specific criteria. In the same way, sampling is the selection of a sample from that population.

The population is all individuals of interest to the researcher although researchers may not be able to study the entire population of interest, it is important that the sample be representative of the population from which it was selected (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2016). Sampling is a procedure, process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study. As stated by Mwanial and Murithi, (2017) probability and non-probability sampling procedures are used in research. Both probability and non-probability sampling are relevant for quantitative as well as qualitative research. Given (2008) explained that the difference between random and purposive sampling. The former one is relevant for quantitative and the latter is relevant for qualitative research. Given (Ibid) random sampling is about selecting a sample from a population, while purposive sampling is about defining the population of eligible data sources, prior to selecting the actual sample. For the purpose of this study, therefore, the researcher has selected the participants according to their diverse backgrounds, characteristics and knowledge. Furthermore, the sample size is the number of data sources that are actually selected from the total population and sampling frame that defines the members of the population who are eligible to be

included in a given sample in the sense of drawing a boundary or frame around those cases that are acceptable for inclusion in the sample.

The target populations are those who are selected as active stakeholders of the FPC such as residents of Addis Ababa, local media, the Federal, Addis Ababa and Oromia Police Commissions. In addition to these, security agencies at the federal level have been included.

The researcher has conducted In-depth interviews with five senior officials of the FPC, five senior officials of Addis Ababa and Oromia Police Commissions, seven journalists from press, electronic media and Ethiopian Broadcast Authority, two Media and Public Relations Officers from Ministry of Defense (MoD), one officer from the Public Relations Department of National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and one officer from the Public Relations Department of Information Network Security Agency (INSA). Totally the researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with twenty one respondents and one FGD with ten participants who are residents of Kirkos Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration as well as experts with different educational backgrounds have been included in the study.

3.4. Instruments of Data Collection

This particular study has applied in-depth interview and FGD as qualitative data collection tools. Boyce and Neale, (2006) added that a range of methods and tools are often utilized in the qualitative field and the kinds of data collected vary with the aims of the study and the nature of the sample. Boyce and Neale, (Ibid) data that could potentially be used in qualitative study include in-depth and unstructured interviews, focus group discussions; fieldwork diaries and observation notes; diaries; personal documents; and photographs. Furthermore, these data may also be created in a variety of formats: digital, paper (typed or hand-written), audio, video, and photographic.

Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, (2016), added that in-depth interview is face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. Given, (2008) stated that qualitative interviews can range from unstructured to highly structured, but all interviews are open-ended in that respondents can answer in whatever way and to whatever extent they wish and

in that there is some interaction with the interviewer who may probe, extend questions, or raise new topics.

3.4.1. In-depth interview

As noted by Boyce and Neale, (2006) in-depth interviews are interviews in which participants are encouraged and prompted to talk in-depth about the topic under investigation without the researcher's use of predetermined, focused and short answer questions. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. The researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews, but in contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires that use ended questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each question. Accordingly, the researcher conducted the semi-structured interview by developing a written interview guide in advance, with 21 informants who are stated in sample.

3.4.2. Focus Group discussion

According to Yin, (2016) focus groups originally began as a way of collecting data about how sample audiences might have perceived particular types of mass communications. He added, a major rationale for conducting group interviews is when you suspect that people may more readily express themselves when they are part of a group than when they are the target of a solo interview with the researcher. On the contrary, he said that if a participant appears silent in a group setting, you still may try to have a brief solo interview with that person at the end of the group session.

Moreover, he noted, when conversing with such groups, the researcher would serve as what has been defined as a moderator to induce all the members of a group to express their opinions. The researcher used FGD as additional method to collect a sufficient amount of data. To do these the researcher selected ten individuals who share a particular characteristic, demographic, or interest that is relevant to the topic being studied. Case studies involve an in-depth examination of a key informant in in-depth interview or focus group participants to provide an accurate and complete description of the cases.

3.5. Method of Analysis

As explained by Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, (2016) researchers keep track of emerging themes and ideas, read the transcripts, and develop concepts and propositions to begin to interpret their data. Pat (2013), further explained that, the steps to be followed start from collecting all field notes, transcription, documentation, and other materials and reading through them carefully, again by reading through them some more, then starting intensive analysis.

Pat (2013) noted that qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy and the idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. Thus, in this study the qualitative data obtained through interview and FGD were thematically categorized and summarized and then analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1.Introduction

As explained previously, this research attempts to assess the practices and challenges of the crisis communication at the FPC during three selected crises cases. The FGD was conducted by the researcher who forwarded open-ended questions in Amharic language and hired professional typists to transcribe audio records of the discussion in Amharic. After reviewing the accuracy, the transcript was translated to English by using Google translator. Again the researcher has made in-depth interviews with 21 participants among them nineteen participants were interviewed in Amharic language and two in the Oromo language from Oromia Police Commission. The interview ranged from 30 minutes to 50 minutes and an average time of 40 minutes. As stated by Given (2008), the researcher transcribed the audio records of the interviews held in Oromo language to English by himself and hired professional typists to transcribe audio record of Amharic to text. In addition to this, the researcher was listened to each record and reviewed the transcript of Amharic to check for accuracy. Moreover, data analysis began as soon as the interviews were transcribed by the researcher from Amharic and Oromo languages to English by using Google translator. Given, (2008) said that when data analysis is done manually it allows for more familiarity of researchers with the transcripts and participants' responses. Given. (2008) also stated that all transcripts were read out several times over to immerse the researcher in the data collected and to get a full sense of what each participant described. As noted by Dawson, (2002) the data generated from the transcripts were analyzed using thematic content analysis.

The first one is the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele, the late Project Manager of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), on July 26, 2018. The second incident is the death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera on June 24, 2019 and the third is the case of prominent Oromo politician, Jawar Mohammed's 'safety call' for his supporters via social media on Oct. 23, 2019. (Detail attached at appendix) In this chapter, the researcher elaborates the findings of the data collected from primary and secondary sources. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with five FPC senior officials, five senior officials from Addis Ababa and

Oromia Police Commissions, seven journalists from press, electronic media and Ethiopian Broadcast Authority. The researcher has also involved two media and public relations officers from Ministry of Defense forces, one officer from the National Intelligence and Security Service Public Relations Department and one officer from Information Network Security Agency Public relations department. Totally the researcher conducted in- depth interviews with twenty one respondents and one Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with ten participants who are residents of Kirkos sub-city of Addis Ababa City Administration and experts with different educational backgrounds.

Moreover, the secondary data was gathered from the media; Addis Standard, BBC, and www.oromiamedia.org and Addis Fortune newspaper website. All the contents gathered for assessment of crises communication practices and challenges in case of the FPC from 10 April 2020 to 27 May 2020. The analysis is structured according to the research questions, in the three selected cases are treated separately under sub heads and dominant crisis communication theories discussed in chapter two of the study.

4.2. Crises Communication Strategy

According to Fearn-Banks (2011), Strategy is an approach on how one handles a problem. Tench and Yeomans, (2009) added that crises communication strategy is critical to public relations success and successful public relations programs do not just happen rather it is due to professional public relations experts do their jobs in accordance with a plan; as planning puts them in control. As stated by Modén, (2008) crisis communication is the information that is exchanged by and between public authorities, organizations, the media, affected individuals and groups before, during and after a crisis.

4.2.1. Engineer Simegnew Bekele's case

The researcher assessed crisis case that is related to the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele. According to research questions that asks whether the Police Commission had a clear written document for Crisis Communication strategy or not. Accordingly, respondents that are senior officials of the FPC said that the Commission did not develop such strategy. The FPC has public relations annual plan and guideline of Police Commission press conference and risk management

plan to assess peace and security threat of the country. For instance one in-depth interview respondent noted the following:

“In the Commission communication means media relations, sports music and theater, all are assumed as communication activity, the difference between media relations and communications were linked. The Commission gave more emphasis to the media; the Commission is not familiar with aspects of communication. Even the commanders assigned to the department have no knowledge about communication. That is why a crisis communication strategy was not developed. The department has to be led by professionals. The Commission has a proactive risk management strategy to protect the internal and external peace and security. But this risk management strategy has not been integrated with crisis communication”/Informant from FPC 2020/

Most of the informants share this idea that the Commission has of course developed a risk management strategy and that the Police were good in proactive operations and know in advance elements or factors of threat for peace and security in advance. However, all admitted that crisis communication strategy has not been developed.

Response obtained through FGD reveals support to the idea mentioned above and further elaborate on mismanagement of crisis in the Commission.

For instance, concerning crisis communications, one of FGD respondents has the following to say:

“If the Commission had crisis communication it would not have provided inconsistent information for the public. Hence, the Commission has to differentiate what has to be done at each stage of crisis by utilizing crisis communication plan.”/from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city 2020/

Another FGD participant noted that:

"In my understanding, during the sudden death of Engineer Simegnaw Bekele the Commission did not manage the crisis scientifically just like other countries do"/from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city 2020/

Some respondents seem to be defensive about proactive measures and crisis communication strategy. Among those one of the respondents stated that:

“In my experience, I saw those three crises and during this government reform, when such things happened, crises were inevitable. During that time political issues did not settle down how one can forecast such a thing as it is sudden death.” /from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city 2020/

The researcher also looked into the risk management strategy developed by the Commission and found out that it does not mention anything about crisis communication strategy. Instead, it gives attention on how to protect the country from internal and external threats. During the in-depth interview, many of the respondents from FPC were asked to forward their view on this point. They replied that the Commission should develop crisis communication strategy document to prevent or to mitigate a crisis that might encounters. They stated that if the Commission gives information regularly based on contingency crisis communication plan prepared in advance, it will, calm down the community and can save the lives of innocent people together with damage on government and public property.

4.2.2. The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

The researcher has assessed the crisis case related to the death of General Seare Mekonnen according to research questions whether the FPC has a clear written document and practice on Crisis Communication strategy or not. Accordingly, most of the respondents of in-depth interview confirmed that no attempt of such kind was made. Responses indicated that the FPC has public relations annual plan and guideline of Police Commission press conference and risk management plan to assess peace and security threats in the country.

Regarding this, one of the respondents of in-depth interview stated that:

“Even though the crisis communication strategy is an essential tool in dealing with a crisis, disaster or accident the Commission has not yet developed crisis communication plan. It would have protected its reputation by communicating the right message, at the right time, to the right people to save life. The problem is dominantly lack of communication professionals”/Informant from FPC 2020/

The issue of lack of the knowhow and professionalism has been a common problem as response from both FGD and interview indicates. Most believe that the Commission has no professionals that could lead the crisis issues scientifically. Regarding this, one of the in-depth interview respondents said that:

“What you asked is an international principle, however, in the Commission we do not yet have a crisis communication plan to manage the crisis properly. Even the Commission did not have a well-developed website as it is a vital crisis management tool to distribute persuasive information quickly to widely dispersed audiences during crises. The problem started from assigning an unprofessional director and even the assigned one was not a permanent member of an important part of the top management of the commission, then nobody listens to suggestions to do communication work in scientific ways. Even though crisis management team has great role in collecting information, protecting or restoring an organization’s reputation; the Commission has not yet established the system and the practice it follows.”/Informant from FPC.2020/

4.2.3. The case of Jawar Mohammed

The researcher has assessed crisis case that is related to Jawar Mohammed’s ‘safety call’ for his supporters via social media in line with research questions whether the FPC has a clear written document and practiced as crisis communication strategy or not. Majority of responses were similar that there were no preparedness at the time and that there was no written strategy document to be used to make the process more scientific.

Accordingly, respondents from in-depth interview noted that:

“Even though the Commission had started a reform still there is no progress in developing crisis communication strategy and the practice to manage crisis properly during Jawar Mohamed’s case.”/ Informant from FPC. 2020/

Thus, the responses in all the cases indicate that there were no crisis response and management preparedness for the incidents at hand and that the Commission lacked professionals that could lead the department scientifically.

4.3. Preparation at pre-crisis stage

Generally, a pre-crisis stage is a period of crisis prevention and preparation. At this stage, organizations are thus expected to pay attention to several tasks to prevent and prepare for crises. Organizing crisis communication plans, assigning a spokesperson for crisis time, establishing crisis teams, detecting signals and enhancing the recalling capacities are some of the principal's pre-crisis phase activities or tasks to minimize risks and prevent issues as early as possible.

4.3.1. Engineer Simegnew Bekele's case

This section assessed presence of pre-crisis stage tasks as a proactive measure that was in place in case of FPC before the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele. Overall response indicates that there was no advanced pre-crisis activity at the Commission. The informant gave similar views on this point. Accordingly, one of the FGD participants said that:

“Before the death of Simegnew Bekele the Commission did not appoint bodyguards as he was top Ethiopian Engineer , as to my understanding, there was a problem in forecasting crisis that will come and development of pre-crisis communication strategic plan in advance or there was lack of having contingency plan to prevent crisis and mitigate it.”
/from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city.2020/

Such responses indicate that pre-crisis measure could have changed the outcome of the incident and that the accident could have been averted. The rest key informants of the FGD also agreed on this idea. Another in depth interview respondent states that:

“I have been working in this department for many years, but I did not see any pre-crisis communication strategies that were practiced in the commission. There was a problem in forecasting crisis that will come and development of pre-crisis communication strategic plan in advance to prevent crisis and mitigate harms that would probably come following the crisis.”/Informant from FPC, 2020/

Most of the informants of in-depth interview also share this idea and they added that proactive thinking to avert the crisis at an early warning stage was not well known. On the other hand, majority of the informants of FPC told that the Commission had surveillance or intelligence

department that identify the threat that might encounter the FPC in terms of peace and security. However, another respondent of in-depth interview said that:

“During the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele I was not engaged in this pre-crisis activity. But we are committed to preventing crisis related matters with the aim of securing peace and security; however, we have not yet begun to work in a unified and integrated manner with the Commission's public relations department.”/Informant from FPC, 2020/

4.3.2 The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

Similarly, most of the informants from FPC confirmed that there was no any pre-crisis assessment before the death of generals. They said that it was impossible to know such things in advance. To assess if there were pre-crisis stage tasks at time of the death of generals, the researcher requests the FGD respondents and one of the respondents said that:

“As stakeholder we did not participate in any pre-crisis stage of crisis communication assessment and consultation with the Commission” /from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Another respondent noted that:

“Even though we are in reform there is no indication to develop pre-crisis communication and to assess the crisis that is likely to encounter the Commission; yet we did not start to use this strategy to manage crisis in advance during the death of generals.” /Informant from FPC, 2020/

4.3.3 The case of Jawar Mohammed

To assess presence of pre-crisis stage in the case related to Jawar Mohammed, the researcher requested both interview and the focus group discussants to give their view. The responses indicated that the incident of the activist Jawar Mohammed's 'safety call' for his supporters via social media was not different and that it happened as a surprise to most in the Commission. They say the crisis put the Police in a lot of questionings; one of the FGD participants said that:

“As stakeholder we did not participate in any pre-crisis stage of crisis communication assessment and consultation with the Commission. Such activity has not been a trend in our department.” /from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

The overall response indicates that the Commission did not put in place any kind of pre-crisis action that would have mitigated the outcome of the crisis. Some even have the view that pre-crisis actions are impossible to deal with.

4.4. Response at crisis stage

This is the stage in which the organization is required to communicate to the public once a crisis occurs. As noted by Coombs and Holladay (2015), although preparedness is seen as a proactive strategy, in the event of an actual crisis, the strategies used actually become reactive because they are implemented after the crisis has happened. Response conditions in each of the three incidents have been presented as follows.

4.4.1 Engineer Simegnew Bekele’s case

Most of the FPC in-depth interview respondents said that there was no document to be used at the crisis stage. Responses were based on experience of the communicators. They stated that conflicting information on the death resulted from unified information provision mechanism. Again most of the FGD informants said that if the FPC had proper crisis communication strategy, it would have properly managed the flow of information the way they are doing now with corona virus prevention.

For instance, one of the in-depth interviews respondents said that:

“During the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele the FPC could not proactively give information; it talks after many people gave their speculations and then made their own decision. All things were out of control and everyone gave their own suggestion with their own way at that time; the way the information was communicated was wrong. The Commission has not provided timely and accurate information to the media and the public.” / From Ethiopian News Agency, 2020/

Adding on the point, another in-depth interviews respondent stated that:

“if the Commission were to give a statement every day like the one now being given in the Corona virus case, its history would be discussed. But they could not provide concrete and up-to-date information to persuade the community. The social media rumor was very high. The Police investigation was delayed and the person was dealt with in different ways. An Amhara activist was reporting various reports claiming he was assassinated because his tribe was Amhara. All things were out of control and everyone gave their own suggestion in their own way.”/From Ahadu Radio and Television, 2020/

Another FGD respondent also stated that:

“Still we are in confusion concerning the death of Engineer Semegnew Bekele, because at the beginning when Honorable Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmad visiting America and address the death of Engineer in speech, he said “It is possible to kill Engineer Semegnew but it is impossible to stop the Renaissance Dam!” After that we all concluded that the Engineer was assassinated by somebody. A month later FPC declared that Engineer Semegnew Bekele committed suicide. The two statements contradict each other. Hence, it was a challenge for the public to accept and trust the information provided by the Commission. Still now, many people think that the issue is under process but the FPC failed to update the case.” /from Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Video found by the researcher on www.oromiamedia.org website shows the speech of the Prime Minister. Thus the statement of the Prime Minister and the result of investigation declared by the FPC seemingly contradict. Further, most FGD members noted that during crises the FPC could not provide sufficient information timely. After Engineer’s death the investigation took for a month and in this gap the rumor spread widely by the social media was very high. The social media reported more commonly by speculations and guess about the death. On the other hand, the findings of the investigation made by the Police has been released far late after the community has reached at a certain decision and formulated its own conclusion. Again most of the informants did not relay on the result of the FPC investigation. Moreover, the informant added that during the crisis, the FPC did not have or administer a website of its own to provide timely information as an organization.

4.4.2 The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

In relation to the practice of crisis communication at the Commission at this crisis stage in relation to the death of the generals, the researcher obtained similar responses from both the in depth interview and the FGD respondents. The death of the two generals also exhibited, according to respondents, a very important experience on how the Commission reacted to the crisis. Accordingly, one of the respondents said that:

“Concerning the case of the death of the generals’ the Commission has no problem in disclosing the incident. However, the great problem was inconsistency of information publicized. The commission’s contradicting and distorted information had caused confusion among the public. This clearly has signified that it would have been important for the Commission to verify and support with reliable first hand basic evidences before the information had officially and widely been released to the general public. It was very difficult to tell which opinion has prevailed in the public.” /From Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Another respondent also stated that:

“At the time when the FPC provided some information; another institution gave information that contradicted to it. So the Commission could not control flow of information centrally in a coordinated manner. The Commission could not establish an information center. For instance, if we take the case of the murder of the generals, there was no centralized communication style for flow of accurate, reliable and timely information. During the crisis even there was contradictory information, for instance, the person who was suspected to be killer of the generals was announced as he had committed suicide. However, A few hours later it was announced again that he was only wounded and was under medical treatment in the hospital.”/ Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority 2020/

Furthermore, an FGD informant forwards his view as follows:

“When the Prime Minister’s Office Press Secretariat provided information via press conference the spokesperson confirmed that “The generals were assassinated by General

Seare's bodyguard" she has clearly violated the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Article 20(3) which states "during proceeding accused persons have the right to be innocent until proven guilty according to law and not to be compelled to testify against themselves." /From Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

4.4.3 The case of Jawar Mohammed

To assess the practice in relation to the crisis communication strategy of the Commission at crisis stage of Jawar Mohammed's 'safety call' for his supporters via social media the researcher requested respondents of interview and the FGD to give their view on the matter. All the problems of information flow also happened at this incident.

With regard to this incident, one of the FGD respondents noted that:

"The Commission could not explain the case of Jawar Mohamed whether he was a deceiver or not. If he was a deceiver, he would be accountable for the loss of life and property; otherwise those who order his body guard during night and paved the way for disorder of the country should be accountable. Until now no person has been identified accountable." /From Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Again, another in-depth interview informant replied that:

"The FPC didn't give information at national level proactively in coordination with its stockholders; there was contradiction and inconsistency of information flow; because of multiples of spokespersons that give conflicting information, for instance, in case of Jawar Mohamed the statement given by the FPC, Oromia Police Commission and Oromia State President were different and there was no coordination. As stakeholders they should haven't consulted and engaged to give similar message to the public." /Oromia Police Commission, 2020/

Response in all the three cases similarly indicate that the Commission had no proper information management and that conflicting information left the public to be exposed to misinformation and rumors. Lack of timely provision of information and the fact that different stakeholders provided different kinds of information has exacerbated the crisis.

4.5. Post crisis stage evaluation

Coombs and Holladay (2015) noted that evaluation, are ways that organizations can reduce human error. They added that post-crisis phase gives various voices and managements the opportunity for follow-up communication, perhaps, for instance, offering the lessons learned from the crisis that can reduce the likelihood of recurrence, mitigate it, if it does, prevent recurrence, and prepare stakeholders for that event.

4.5.1 Engineer Simegnew Bekele's case

The researcher tried to find out if there was any document in this regard but could not find any document that indicated the evaluations of post crisis done at FPC. Even though post crisis analysis is helpful to prepare oneself for future encounters, most of the informants said that the Commission was not familiar with such evaluation after crisis. One of the interview informants said that:

“I have been working for many years in the department but have never seen when the FPC evaluated its performance, at post crisis stage after the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele death and the Commission was not familiar with such activities; after the crisis past there was no any historical document that shows evaluation of crisis communication strategy performance to be taken as a lesson for the future.” /Informant from FPC, 2020/

Another respondent said that:

“In my understanding after the crisis that followed the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele FPC has not properly consulted and engaged us in the case allowing us to play our role as stakeholders; hence, I did not participate in any of post crisis evaluation of performance, if there are any at that time.” /Ababa Police Commission2020/

4.5.2 The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

The researcher tried to find out if there was any document in this regard but he could not find any document that indicated the evaluations of post crisis done at FPC. The researcher asked higher officials of the Police Commission in the in-depth interview regarding post crisis stage practice

and response shows that there was no such kind of practice. In this regard one of the informants said that:

“As crisis communication strategy has not yet been applied in the Commission and as far as my knowledge is concerned in this regard has not been any post-crisis evaluation. Moreover, the case is still pending at court and not yet been finalized up to now.”
/Informant from FPC, 2020/

4.5.3 The case of Jawar Mohammed

Similarly, with the incidents above, post-crisis evaluation of how the Commission reacted to this incident was not found. The senior officials of the Oromia Police Commission gave their view regarding post crisis stage practice. One of the informants states that:

“As stakeholder we did not participate in such evaluation with FPC and I understood that there is no crisis communication strategy in the Commission we are not familiar with such strategy either. /Oromia Police Commission2020/

One of the participants of FGD noted that:

“As stakeholder of the Commission we were not engaged and participated in such an evaluation, and I think we lack such an experience” /From Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Thus, the overall response shows that the Commission had no post crisis evaluation in all of the three incidents and that no proper lessons were drawn from these important crisis incidents.

4.6.Stakeholders engagement and consultation

Fearn-Bank (2011) defined stakeholders as people who are linked to an organization or who have an interest in an organization and are affected by the decisions made by that organization. Strategic publics are stakeholders who are crucial to an organization. Accordingly, as stated in five years strategic plan of the Commission, there are many stakeholders listed; however, for this study; strategic publics are employees, communities, and regional state and federal government officials and media.

4.6.1 Engineer Simegnew Bekele's case

To assess the stakeholders' engagement and consultation at pre-crisis, during crisis and post crisis concerning with death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele's death case, the researcher asked interview respondents and the FGD members if they were participated in consultation of stakeholders during those stages but they replied that nobody invited them on such event. One of the respondents said that:

"I have been working for many years in this sub-city and never seen such consultation with the FPC as a stakeholder. Besides it seems that such a practice is not yet made familiar among concerned organizations in the country. I was of course one of the first to be at the scene but nobody consulted me about the case" /From Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub-city, 2020/

Moreover, in-depth interview response also shows absence of such consultation. One of informants said the following:

"I have been working for 28 years in the Commission. As a Commission we consulted and engaged our active stakeholders; for instance if there is fire accident we consult and engage people and other concerned parties with Fire brigade team to extinguish fire. However, in case of crisis communication, I have not seen such things. I have not participated on crisis communication stakeholders' consultation and engagement activities in the case of crisis for instance such like related to the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele. In case of operation work, we do not work without consulting of our stakeholders." /Informant from FPC, 2020/

Another respondent of in-depth interview noted that;

"In the meantime, I was constantly updating information about the case. No other information was given after Commissioner General Zeinu Kemal provided for the media. There was an information gap for a month; you see the social media rumor was very high everyone started to write based on guess and estimation. There was a balance that he had assassinated by someone and up to now the Commission did not update the case, we are waiting for its response. In my understanding the community was not persuaded by

the FPC investigation result because no sufficient evidence was produced to convince the community. Because of this the community has already concluded that he was assassinated by someone due to the renaissance dam corruption case to conceal the evidence to escape legal liability”/From Ahadu Radio and Television, 2020/

Moreover, most of in-depth interview and FGD informant said that during this crisis, the FPC was not properly consulting and engaging its active stakeholders. As the FPC had to find out how it would deal with stakeholders during crisis; it should manage crisis with cooperation, consultation, coordination and with mutual understanding in an integrated manner as a country for better performance in handling a crisis.

4.6.2. The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

There was no document that indicates Police commission’s engagement and consultation with its selected stakeholders during those three crises in the study. To assess the stakeholders engagement and consultation at pre-crisis, during crisis and post crisis concerning the death of generals. One of the respondents replied that:

“As being in a media organization or as an individual working as a professional journalist I was not invited for consultation and engagement to participate on evaluation of the activities of the Commission on such an incident.” /Addis Standard Magazine, 2020/

Moreover, all of the FGD participants also confirmed that they did not participate as stakeholder on evaluation of such incident even some of them did not know such things.

4.6.3. The case of Jawar Mohammed

Accordingly, the researcher examined the engagement and consultation of the Police Commission during those crises mentioned in the study. As most FPC higher official confirmed that there was no any document that indicates engagement and consultation of the Police Commission with its selected stakeholders during those three crises in the study.

One of the respondents replied that:

“As it’s true that we most of the time participate with many stakeholders, however on crisis communication strategy we were not organized for consultation and engagement,

*for instance, concerning evaluation of Jawar's case. We are still in such a similar practice as before."/>*Informant from FPC, 2020/

The overall responses in all the three cases indicate that the Commission did not conduct any consultation with major stakeholders at all the stages. It seems that this is caused by absence of a clear guiding principle at the organization on how to deal with major stakeholders in order to provide timely information that help in managing the crisis.

4.7. Major challenges the Police Commission faced in the process of communicating the crises selected for this study

As specified in the objectives, the researcher also assessed the major challenges the Commission faced during the crisis. Even though there are similarities in the activities of the Commission, each incident exhibited some level of challenge that hindered the Commission to respond to the crisis effectively.

4.7.1. Engineer Simegnew Bekele's case

Generally, the researcher tried to assess major challenges that the FPC encountered in the process of communicating the crisis in the incidence of death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele. Most of the informants said that lack of media monitoring, lack of public opinion assessment to hear the voice of the community, lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, inconsistency in releasing timely and accurate information, absence of crisis management team, lack of human power especially professionals in communication and related fields are some of the major challenges that accompanied this incident.

With regard to this, a respondent of in-depth interview replied that:

"Sometimes the Commission provides reactive, incredible, inaccurate and vague information to the community through the media and such kind of information would lead the organization towards losing of its positive image and reputation from time to time. As a result of this the community would tend to lose confidence and good relationship that should be existed between FPC, the Security Institutions and stakeholders at institutional level on the one hand and the public on the other hand. If the criminals are not identified at all the levels at the end; if there is no responsible person for his criminal act, how can the community build trust only based on the mere statements released by the

Commission? Due to mismanagement and poor handling of hot incidents and happenings such as cases mentioned above would possibly have negative effect on the efforts of maintaining peace and security in the country.” /Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority 2020/

In addition to this, another informant of FGD added that:

“In my understanding what I assumed as a challenge in the case of Engineer Simegnew Bekele was the FPC standing in favor of the government not in favor of the community. But the Commission’s vision was primarily to save the public not the government. What should be done during crisis and after crisis would calm down the community and can save life. What I always said is that during crisis the information given by the Commission for the public may be exaggerated or understated or both. This kind of thing became challenges for the Commission if it fails to avert it now in order to maintain public trust.” /Communication expert Kirkos sub –city 2020/

Moreover, one of the FGD informants said that:

“What I recognized as a challenge was that the Commission was too late to declare an investigation result and during the press conference while we were in sad mood by the news, however Commissioner General Zeynu Kemal’s facial expression was not reflecting the sad news; and on the contrary he rather was seen smiling in front of the media conference. Many of us were shocked by this incident moreover, the contradiction between the Prime Minister’s speech and the report of the finding of the Police investigation also led many to suspect the process and finding of the Police investigation. Again the removal of the CCTV camera from Bole Road two days before the Engineer’s death is still under question by many. /From House of Kirkos Sub city 2020/

However, the response from some senior officials of the Commission was defensive and that it was not the problem of investigation but problem of social media rumor, and weakness of the communication system that complicated the case.

4.7.2. The death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera

Regarding the challenges the Police Commission faced during this particular crisis the respondents indicated that the major challenges in handling the crisis were lack of crisis communication strategy, lack of preparedness, lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, lack of resource, overlapping role spokespersons that give conflicting information, the misinformation from social media, lack of social media monitoring, lack of public opinion gathering and absence of crisis team management. For instance one of the in-depth interview respondents said the following:

“These three crises occurred suddenly, the Commission moved without adequate preparation and establishing monitoring system and public opinion gathering mechanism to tap in to the voice of the public. It was the media that complicated the case and reported it in an adverse manner; some of them spread rumor and assumption. The FPC failed to give information proactively which this in turn gave chance for the social media to report rumor.” /News editor from Ethiopian News Agency, 2020/

Moreover, another respondent says:

“The Commission was not guided by crisis communication strategy. Hence it faced great challenges from unpreparedness, lack of skill of professionals in crisis communication strategy, use of multiples of spokespersons who released conflicting information, misinformation from social media, lack of social media monitoring, lack of public opinion gathering and absence of crisis team are major challenges the Commission faced.” / Speaker of the House of Kirkos Sub city, 2020/

4.7.3. The case of Jawar Mohammed

When asked about the challenges the Police Commission faced during the crisis, the respondents indicated similar challenges. That includes lack of crisis communication strategy, unpreparedness, lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, use of multiples of spokespersons that give conflicting information, the misinformation from social media lack of social media monitoring, lack of public opinion gathering and absence of crisis team management were major challenges in handling the crisis situation. For instance one in-depth interview respondent said the following:

“In those three cases the Commission didn’t provide information proactively in coordination with its stockholders; there were multiple of spokespersons who gave contradicting statements and there existed inconsistency of information flow.” /Solid Waste Collection & Transportation and Process owner of Kirkos sub-city, 2020/

Moreover, another respondent says:

“There was delay of information during those crises; there was no coordinated and integrated work in exchanging of information with stakeholders. The framework needed to include input and consultation from various stakeholder groups and it must integrated with and the overall emergency management system.” / Community awareness creation and participation solid Waste team leader of kirkos sub city 2020/

The overall response of both the interview and the FGD surfaced several challenges of the Commission during the crisis. Included among these are: lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, use of multiples of spokespersons that give conflicting information, absence of crisis management team, unpreparedness, lack of crisis communication strategy, lack of public opinion gathering and absence of crisis team, the misinformation from social media lack of social media monitoring.

4.8. Validity and Reliability of the finding

As noted by Creswell (2016), in short, validity means that the findings are accurate (or are plausible). You can assess this accuracy through the eyes of the researcher, through the views of participants, and by readers and reviewers of studies (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As noted by Given, (2008), triangulation of sources involves utilizing different data sources within the same method that is if in-depth interview and FGD of collecting data agreed and credible. According to Bazeley (2013) member-checking is the second important technique that qualitative researchers use to establish credibility. Additionally, she said that member checking is a strategy for confirmation of findings as they are being developed during or at the conclusion of analysis and it allows participants to clarify what their intentions were, correct errors, and provide additional information if necessary. Moreover, she added that member-checking is an alternative strategy to provide a summary of the findings of the research to those who register interest in receiving it, giving them the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher (preferably in time to incorporate their ideas into the final analyses and reports of the research).

Hence, the researcher used triangulation of sources for cross examination of the finding of in-depth interview with that of focus group discussion. Thus when cross examined the finding supports each other and there was consistency of idea in all those three crisis cases. Moreover, the researcher used member-checking strategy to check credibility of the finding during data interpretations and analysis participant to clarify their intention to correct errors, and provide additional information. Thus, as the results of in-depth interview and FGD and secondary data sources are compatible, this finding is credible.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has attempted to assess the practices and challenges of the FPC in crisis communication based on selected crisis incidents. This section presents the summary of major findings, the conclusion and the recommendations of the study.

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

Based on research and analysis undertaken the researcher discovered the following major findings: In order to address the first research question that explores if the Police Commission had crisis communication strategy in place and practiced it to manage those selected crises in the study. The finding reveals that even though crisis communication is a vital tool to manage the crisis, the Commission has not yet developed Crisis Communication Strategy in all the three selected cases of the crisis. Thus, the Commission has no crisis communication strategy to tackle crisis that encountered the Commission. The findings of the data reveal that even though the Commission has not developed a crisis communication strategy during pre-crisis, there is another department which made an assessment of risk management to identify the threat of peace and security from internal and external issues. The threat they identified also may cause a crisis for the communication. Thus, collection of information about crisis risks, watching for warning signs to making decisions about how to manage potential crises, preparing plans proactively to avoid the crisis and training people who will be involved in the crisis management process was done in the intelligence directorate. However, selecting spokespersons and crisis communication team establishment, training of crisis team members, crisis spokespersons were not done.

During the crises the Commission had no crisis communication strategy to respond and it has not yet established a crisis team, media monitoring, public opinion gathering team which helps to hear what the community said about the Commission. Most informants confirmed that during those crises, the FPC did not properly control the flow of information and message by establishing an information center as it helps for smooth flow of information. Again, during the post crisis stage the FPC has not yet developed a strategy to evaluate post crisis in those three

selected crises. Consequently, the FPC has failed to notice evaluation of major strengths and weaknesses.

In an attempt to respond to the second research objective, respondents of the interview and the focus group discussants identified the major challenges the Police Commission faced in the process of communicating the crises. Accordingly, the finding shows that the major challenges faced by the Commission are: lack of crisis communication strategy, unpreparedness, lack of resource, lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, absence of crisis management team, use of multiples of spokespersons that give conflicting information, inconsistency of information, the misinformation from social media, bloggers and some activists. Other challenges include, absence of media monitoring system and public opinion assessment framework.

It was found out that the stakeholders' such as media and community were not properly engaged in consultation of the Commission during pre-crisis, crisis and post crisis stages. As a result, there was inconsistency of information that was released by regional states higher officials and FPC. Moreover, during those crises system and structural framework was not established for exchanging proper flow of information from bottom up and vice versa. The finding also indicated that during crisis media personnel did suffer from scarcity of accurate, credible, and proactive information. During the crisis spokesperson was not identified and media center to control flow of information was not identified during those selected crisis cases. Even during those crises, the FPC has not yet developed a website that helps in providing updated information quickly for the public.

In case of the last objective that enquires the reaction of the wider community to the response of the Police Commission during those selected crises cases, respondents provided a number of community reactions as findings. Concerning this issue, most of the informants said that the community suspects information provided by the Police Commission due to its inconsistency, contradiction and delay of information given to the community. The FPC could not support its finding with sufficient evidence to persuade the community. Some of the informants said that the FPC did not produce sufficient information in those crisis cases mentioned in the study. People are still waiting for the responsible persons regarding the resolution of all the three cases. For

instance, some members of the public have not believed that Engineer Simegnew Bekele committed suicide; rather they seemed to have believed that he was assassinated.

5.2. Conclusion

Most of the time organizations that are engaged in peace and security like the Ethiopian FPC are vulnerable to many crises and face serious challenge to tackle them. Crisis cannot be prevented through business as usual means. It needs strategic thinking; hence developing proactive strategy of crisis communication at pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis stages, as well as engagement and consultation of stakeholders at each level can assist the FPC during crisis. According to Miller, (2012), system theory organizations are dependent on their respective environment and there exists interdependence for mutual need. System theory gives a way to think about relationships. Acting independently and not interdependently can create crises and limit the effectiveness of organizations when confronted with crisis.

For instance, during a crisis if Police do not share information and intelligence with each section of the operation the Commission at the center could not be effective. According to Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) proper crisis communication applies not only to the prevention of crises but also ability to communicate when crises arise. As most informants confirmed in this study resolving crisis requires cooperation, mutual interdependence, consensus and integrated work of different stakeholders. During crisis even messages that are intended to create a reaction or a certain type of behavior are much more powerful when they are sent by several actors in the same way.

Likewise, the Ethiopian FPC could not survive independently for it depends on the community to get resources rather. The community on the other hand, could not survive independently without getting Police service either. Both are interdependent for mutual need. However, when this interdependence gets endangered and become ineffective it can weaken management of crisis. If Police have made mistakes during action and through communication discourse its leaders should apologize the community and rebuild good relationships. As noted by Coombs (2015), crisis communication is the lifeblood of crisis management. When crisis communication is ineffective, the crisis management effort is also ineffective. Therefore, a proactive approach is required to

crisis management of the FPC to explore the entire process of crisis. Managers of the FPC should think of crisis management as akin to SWOT analysis.

Through crisis management, the FPC has to identify the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats to tackle the crises. A quick crisis SWOT analysis will awaken management to the need to take crisis management and crisis communication very seriously. No such preparedness was seen in case of the FPC's crisis response efforts in all the selected cases. Moreover, as suggested by excellent theory, communication affairs director of the FPC's should be permanent member of the commissions' management. As noted by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002), in the same way empowerment of the communicator is necessary because the senior communicator executive has direct involvement role in the strategic management processes of the organization, and communication programs are developed for strategic public identified as a part of this strategic management process. They added that public relations contribute to strategic management by scanning the environment to identify publics affected by the consequences of decisions or who might affect the outcome of decisions. Lack of skilled human resource has limited the Commission's effort to tackle major communication problems pertinent to the cases at hand.

Proactive crisis communication strategy should be developed to protect the reputation of the FPC by communicating the right message, at the right time, to the right people. If the FPC does not seize control of the situation, there will be information vacuum that will be filled by the media in detriment of the FPC. As some of the informants of the study stated the FPC did not establish media monitoring and public opinion gathering and analysis system to hear the voice of the community and also that of the various stakeholders including the media. As stated by Grunig and Hunt (1984), two-way symmetric model approach will most often produce a win-win outcome. Thus, during crises the Police Commission was supposed to use a two-way symmetric model of communication if it desires, to listen to the public and to give feedback. Likewise, the Police Commission is required to make changes in its communication programs to manage a crisis by developing crisis communication strategy.

The researcher has analyzed the FPC primary and secondary data to assess Crises Communication Strategy Practices and challenges. Accordingly the researcher concluded that the FPC has not yet recognized the importance of a crisis communication strategy. Major challenges that the

Commission faced during those selected crisis cases are lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, lack of crisis communication strategy, unpreparedness, lack of resource, lack of skilled professionals in crisis communication, absence of crisis management team, use of multiples of spokespersons that provide conflicting information, inconsistency of information, the misinformation from social media, bloggers and activists. Absence of media monitoring and public opinion assessment framework, absence of websites that help to provide information quickly during crises and unstable political system were major challenges.

Moreover, regarding crisis management; commissioner General of the FPC is committed to organize press conferences during the death of the Generals and the case with Jawar Mohammed even though it did not follow any crisis communication strategy. But regarding stakeholder engagement and consultation no attempt was in place. Although extensive study is required to know the general public opinion; most of the informants said that the community do not fully relay on information provided by the FPC due to its inconsistency, contradiction and delay of information. Most of the informants said that during those crises, the Police Commission was unable to support its findings with sufficient evidence to persuade the public.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, and with an attempt to overcome future challenges that might encounter the Ethiopian FPC, the researcher would like to forward the following suggestions or recommendations:

- Generally, as the findings of the study revealed the Police Commission has not practiced crisis communication as a strategy to manage crisis. However, scholars argue that crisis communication is essential tool in prevention and mitigation of the crisis and enables an organization to respond appropriately in order to maintain public confidence and minimize the damage. Therefore, the FPC should develop crisis communication as strategy for effective crisis management.
- As noted by scholars in pre-crisis, crisis communication revolves around collecting information about crisis risks, making decisions about how to manage potential crises, and training people who will be involved in the crisis management process. The training includes crisis team members, crisis spokespersons, and any individuals who will help

with the response. However, the Police Commission did not go in line with this concept when confronted by those crises mentioned in the study. Hence, the Police Commission should use proper strategy to identify main interventions during the three crisis stages especially the pre-crisis.

- Moreover, tasks done at crisis stage, includes the collection and processing of information for crisis team decision making along with the creation and dissemination of crisis messages to people outside of the team. Similarly, Post-crisis involves analyzing the crisis management effort, communicating necessary changes to individuals, and providing follow-up crisis messages as needed. Hence, the Police Commission should adjust itself to manage crisis accordingly.
- An excellent public relations department communicates with these publics to bring their voices into strategic management, thus making it possible for stakeholder publics to participate in organizational decisions that affect them. Consequently, the FPC didn't act in this manner during those crises stated in the study. Hence, during crisis, the FPC should consult and engage with its active publics through two-way symmetrical model.
- Since public relations tasks are not well-known in the Commission, the communication directorate of the Police Commission is expected to be ill-equipped and have shortage of skilled human power to accomplish its duty. The director has no power to involve in key organizational decision-makings during crisis. As a result, he/she cannot receive firsthand information on important issues from the horse's mouth. Hence, the FPC should promote director of the communication/ public relations/ unit as a permanent member of the dominant coalition of the Commission in all kinds of provision of resources.
- The FPC could not yet establish strong framework or system to hear the voice of the community during crisis. Hence, it should establish social and mainstreaming media monitoring, public opinion assessment framework to hear the voice of the community through a two-way symmetrical communication programs to manage the crisis.
- During those crises, the Police Commission tried to provide information reactively. However as confirmed from FGD and in-depth interviews some information were not

verified and clear. Thus, the Police Commission should verify the information prior to releasing it to stakeholders. This task needs to be done by establishing crisis communication team.

Reference

- Allan J. Kimmel., (2004) Rumors and rumor control, 10 Industrial Avenue Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Anthonissen F. Peter (2008) practical PR strategies for reputation management and company Survival, 120 Pentonville Road 525 South 4th Street, #241, London N1 9JN Philadelphia PA 19147 United Kingdom USA. Kogan Page.
- Angela G. Coonce, (2019).third crisis communication for law enforcement: crafting a successful Strategy using social media, Monterey, California, Webster University.
- Ansgarand Van Ruler, (2008), Public Relations Research, Netherlands, VS Verlagfür Sozia lwissenschaften.
- Bazeley Pat (2013) Qualitative Data Analysis Practical Strategy, SAGE Publications Ltd, Oliver's Yard .55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP.
- Boyce, C., & Neale, P. (2006).Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input.
- Bryman, A. (2007) Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. Journal of Methods Research, 1(1), 8-22.
- Carl H.Botan . Vincent Hazleton, (2006), Public Relations theory II, New York London, Lawrence Erlbam Associate. Inc.
- Coombs, T., & Schmidt, L. (2000) An empirical analysis of image restoration, Texaco's racism crisis. Journal of Public Relations Research, 12(2), 163-178.
- Coombs, W. T. (2007) Protecting organization reputations during a crisis, The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. Corporate reputation review.
- Creswell, J.W. (1994) Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998) Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2003) Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, (2nd.ed.).
- Crisis Communications Handbook, (2008) Swedish Emergency Management Agency, NRSTryckeri, Huskvarna.

- Creswell, J., W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research, (4th. ed.).
- Creswell, (2016). 30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher, Thousand Oaks, California SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Coonce, A. G. (2019) Crisis Communication For Law Enforcement: Crafting A Successful Strategy Using Social Media. Naval Postgraduate School Monterey United States.
- Dawit Endeshaw, (2018) A tragic end to a celebrated Engineer , Addis Ababa Ethiopia, The reporter.
- Dawit Temesgen. (2019) Crisis Communication Strategies of Ethiopian Airlines Group: A Case Study of Flight 302 Accident (Doctoral dissertation, Addis Ababa University).
- Dawson, (2002) Practical Research Methods, How to Books Ltd, 3 Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RE. United Kingdom.
- Elias Meseret, (June 23, 2019) Ethiopia says military chief killed, regional coup failed, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Associated Press News.
- Fitsum Zerue (2018). Crisis Communication as a Strategy to Protect Reputation: Mirinda (Doctoral dissertation, AAU).
- George D. Haddow and Kim S. Haddow, (2009) Disaster Communications in a Changing Media
- Griese, N. L. (2002) How to manage organizational communication during crisis. Anvil Publishers, Inc. World, Butterworth-Heinemann is an imprint of Elsevier 30 Corporate Drive, Suite 400, Burlington, MA 01803, USA Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford OX28DP, UK
- Griese, N. L. (2002) How to manage organizational communication during crisis. Anvil Publishers, Inc.
- Ihlen, Øyvind, Betteke van Ruler, Magnus Fredriksson, (2009) Public Relations and Social Theory, Key Figures and Concepts, 270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016, Routledge
- J. Taylor, Bogdan and L. DeVault ,(2016) Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods, Hoboken, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- John Doorley and Helio Fred Garcia, (2007) Reputation Management: The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication, New York, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
- Jean-Noel Kapferer, (2004) How Rumors are Born, Society, Vol. 73, No. 1
- Kalton, G. (1983) Quantitative applications in the social sciences: Introduction to

- surveysampling. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Vol.35.
- Kathleen Fearn-Banks, (1996) *Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach*, New York, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. (2nd ed.).
- Kathleen Fearn-Banks, (2007) *Crisis Communications, a Casebook Approach* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, New Jersey London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 3rd edition.
- Kathleen Fearn-Banks, (2011) *Crisis Communications, a Casebook Approach*, (4th ed.). Mahwah, New Jersey London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Katherine Miller, (2012) *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes*, 20 Channel Center Street Boston, MA 02210 USA, Wadsworth.
- King III, G. Alan Jay Zaremba (2015) *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice*, International Journal of Communication, 5, 2. Retrieved from
- Kjell Brataas, (2018) *Case Studies and Lessons Learned from International Disasters*, 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 1001, Routledge.
- K. Yin, (2016). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, the Guilford Press (2nd ed.), New York,
- Larissa A. Grunig, James E. Grunig and David M. Dozier, (2002) *Excellent Public Relations And Effective Organization*, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430 London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Lindberg, (2008) *Crisis Communications Handbook*, NRS Tryckeri, Huskvarna, February, Swedish Emergency Management Agency.
- L. Sellnow and W. Seeger, (2013) *Theorizing Crisis Communication*, John, the Atrium, Southern Gate, Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Matew, B. (2017) *Children and TV Violence*. New York, Macgruire publishers
- Mawby, (2002) *Policing image, policing, communication and legitimacy*, Culmcott House Mill Street Ufulme, Cullompton Devon, EX15 3AT, UK, Willan Publishing
- Marczyk, DeMatteo, Festinger, (2005) *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology* Hoboken, New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Nature Switzerland AG.
- Modén Kari, (2008) *Crisis Communications Handbook*, NRS Tryckeri, Huskvarna, Swedish Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).
- Munhall, P. L., & Chenail, R. J. (2008) *Qualitative research proposals and reports: A guide*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- M. Mwanali, Murithi, (2017) *European Journal of Education Studies*, Kenya, Open Access

- Publishing Group, (11, volume 3).
- M. Given, (2008) The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, Road thousand Oaks, California, SAGE Publications, Inc. Ed. No. 91320, Volumes 1& 2.
- N. Ndlela, (2009) Crisis Communication, a Stakeholder Approach, Elverum, Norway, Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001) Qualitative research & evaluation methods (3rd.ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990) Qualitative evaluation and research methods, SAGE Publications. Newbury Park, London New Delhi.
- Quinlan, C., Babin, B., Carr, J., & Griffin, M. (2019) Business research methods. South Western Cengage. Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (2013) Qualitative research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.sage.
- Robyn Lee Kriel(October 23, 2019) (@robynkriel1), Oromo youth standing guard outside@Jawar_Mohammed house in Bole and chant, [#addisababapic.twitter.com/JLHBnN3217](https://addisababapic.twitter.com/JLHBnN3217).
- Sally J. Ray, (1999) Strategic Communication in Crisis Management United States of America, Green wood Publishing Group, Inc.
- Shirley Harrison, (1999) Disasters and the Media Managing crisis communications Palgrave Macmillan, Palgrave Macmillan in the UK.
- Suresh, S. (2014) Nursing research and statistics, Elsevier Health Sciences.
- Tara John, (2018) Ethiopian Engineer Simegnaw Bekele 'took his own life', UK, BBC
- The case of Five years Strategic plan of the Police Commission from year 2015-2020 years.
- Tench and Yeomans, (2006) Exploring Public Relations, England, Pearson Education Limited.
- Tench and Yeomans, (2009) Exploring Public Relations, England, Pearson Education Limited.
- Timothy L. Sellnow and Matthew W. Seeger, (2013) Theorizing Crisis Communication. JohnWiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK
- Van Ruler Betteke and VerčičDejan (2004) Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe, Mouton de Gruyter (formerly Mouton, The Hague) is a Division of Walter Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin.
- Vos, Lund, Reich and Harro-Loit, (2011) Developing a Crisis Communication Scorecard,

Pekka Olsbo, Sini Tuikka, University of Jyväskylä.

W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay, (2010) *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom,
John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

W. Timothy Coombs, (2015) *Parameters for Crisis Communication*, University of Central
(4th.ed.) Florida, SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendix I

In depth Interview Guide

I. Questions for senior leaders of the Federal and the Addis Ababa Police Commission.

1. What kind of strategy did the Police Commission used to manage selected crises for this study? What were the major challenges the Police Commission faced in the process of communicating the crises selected for this study?
2. What crisis prevention and preparation strategies were available before the crisis hit the commission?
3. How did the Police Commission engage and consult with its stakeholders on the efforts of crisis response?
4. What did the Police Commission do after the crisis had been assumed resolved?
5. What are the major challenges that the Commission faced during the crisis in all the given incidents?
6. Did the Police Commission provide proactively, reliable and accurate, up-to-date information for the community through media and during these crises?
7. During those crises; how was the community reaction and emotion expressed to the response of the Commission?
8. What main recommendations would you have to improve the future performance of the commission?

II. Questions for Press and Electronics media journalists and public relations

1. How did the stakeholders' such as the media engaged in consultation of the Police commission during those crises?
2. During those crises; how was the community reaction and emotion expressed to the response of the Commission?
3. What main recommendations would you have to improve the future performance of the Police commission concerning crisis communication?
4. How do you evaluate the commission's information presentation during the crisis?

Appendix II

III. Questions for FGD

1. Did the Police commission use a strategic crisis communication plan to manage the three crisis cases mentioned in this study?
2. How the crisis affected the Commission?
3. How did the Police commission respond to the three crises mentioned in this study at three stages of crisis? That is at the pre-crisis, crisis stage and post crisis stage.
4. Did the Police commission proactively provide accurate, up-to-date and reliable information for the community through the media during those three crisis cases?
5. Did the Police Commission engage and consult with its stakeholders to coordinate the flow of information in crisis communication of those crises?
6. During those crises; what was the major reaction of the community to the response of the Commission?
7. What main recommendations would you have for the improvement of the crisis communication performance of commission?

Appendix III

IV. Crises cases encountered FPC.

1. The Case death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele

One recent case where crisis communication principles were applied to Ethiopian FPC was the death of Engineer Simegnew Bekele. According to Endeshaw (2019) reported Engineer Simegnew Bekele was found dead in his vehicle in Addis Ababa's Meskel Square on early morning of July 26, 2018. Simegnew's body was discovered inside his Toyota Land Cruiser V8; plate number AA, Code 3, A29722 with the engine still running. The location where his dead body was discovered is a place where morning joggers frequent. BBC also added that at his funeral, Police used tear gas to control the thousands who had gone to pay their respects. The vehicle was also parked at a place where cross-country buses load and unload. After more than a month looking into the Engineer's death, the authorities found "that he used his own gun and killed himself," Police chief Zeinu Jemal told journalists. According to the Commissioner General of the FPC Zeinu Jemal, Simegnew's vehicle was seen at the crime scene as early as 8:30 am and

apparently he was reported to have checked in his office in the morning around 7:30 am. But, it was at 10:57 am that the crime scene was marked by yellow tapes. Minutes after, his body was taken to St. Paul Hospital for autopsy. In a press briefing he gave in the afternoon, the Commissioner also revealed that the Police have discovered a pistol in the right-hand side of the deceased, although the bullet entry wound was on the left side of the neck. Hundreds of protesters angry at the Engineer's death, which many suspect to be a murder, gathered in front of state television ETV calling for justice. The news brought shock, with many Ethiopians mourning his death, and social media full of comments speculation, rumors and misinformation spread quickly.

2. The death of General Seare Mekonnen and his colleague

Another case where crisis communication principles were applied to Ethiopian FPC was the death of General Seare Mekonnen and General Gezai Abera. According to Meseret (2019) reported spokesman for Ethiopia's Prime Minister Nigussu Tilahun said the head of the country's military Gen. Seare Mekonnen has been shot dead on 22 June 2019. He added that he was assassinated by his bodyguard at his residence in Addis Ababa. Moreover he explained retired major general Gezai Abera was also assassinated in the same attack.

3. The case of Jawar Mohammed (Activist)

As noted by Kriel (2019) in a Facebook post, Jawar said Police had surrounded his house late on Tuesday and ordered his bodyguards to leave. He added that he did not know who had ordered the deployment of the security officers." If they [authorities] want to arrest they could just summon me," Jawar said. "Now it appears the plan was not to arrest me. The plan was to remove my security and unleash civilian attackers and claim it was a mob attack." But state media on Wednesday quoted Endeshaw Tassew, commissioner general of the FPC, as saying in a statement that no measure had been taken against Jawar either by the government or the Police. The next day several roads heading out of Addis Ababa remained closed. Jawar said he was notified by the FPC that his bodyguards would be removed to attend special training. It is recalled that at least 96 people were murdered and hundreds of others wounded in October last year in a chain of protests that happened after Jawar Mohammed said the government tried to remove his bodyguards.